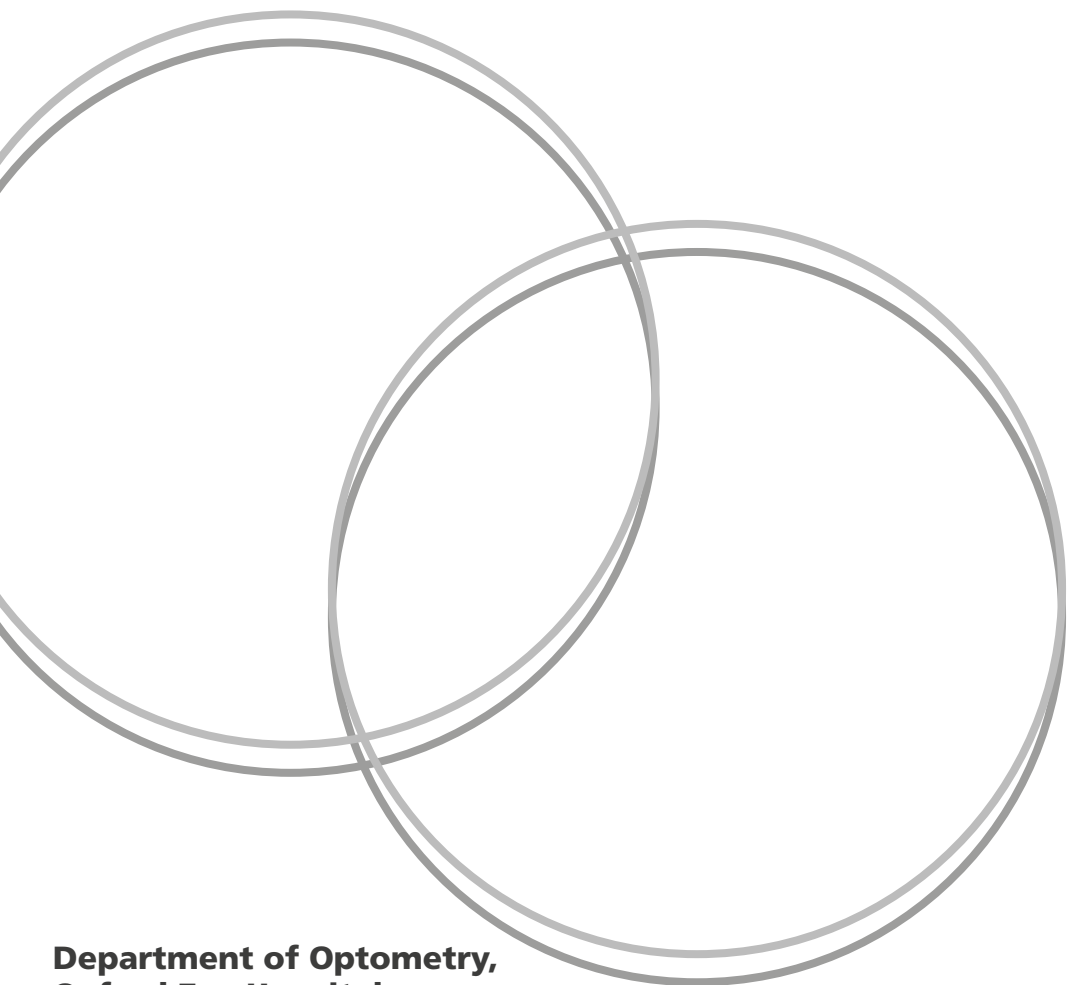




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Low Vision Services for Adults in Oxfordshire

Information for patients



Department of Optometry,  
Oxford Eye Hospital

## **What is low vision?**

A person is described as having low vision when their ability to see is reduced even when using both eyes and wearing their correct glasses. It can cause difficulties when performing everyday tasks, such as reading.

There are a number of eye conditions that can result in low vision. Whilst treatment is available for some eye conditions, it is not always possible to restore perfect vision. It is important in the first instance that you are first seen by an Ophthalmologist (eye doctor) to make a diagnosis (find the reason why your vision is reduced). Your community Optometrist or GP can make the referral to the Ophthalmology service for you.

There are a vast number of services available in Oxfordshire for people with low vision. This leaflet outlines some of these services.

## **Ophthalmology**

If you have poor central vision or poor edge vision you will usually have already been seen by an Ophthalmologist for advice about your condition. However, if you have any new questions, particularly about new therapies or changes to your existing condition, your community Optometrist or GP can refer you back to the Ophthalmologist.

## **Visual aids clinic or 'low vision clinic'**

The Optometry department at the Oxford Eye Hospital runs a visual aids clinic for people with low vision. You can ask to be seen in Oxford, Banbury or Wantage for a visual aids assessment.

After discussing your needs and requirements, the Optometrist will conduct an eye examination to make sure that your glasses are still giving you the best vision you can get and will give you advice on tints and glare protection if relevant.

There are a range of devices available to help you make the most of your vision. Magnifiers, or optical traditional aids, are one type of device available. There are different strengths and types of magnifier available, depending on your vision and the task you would like to do. The hospital Optometrist will assess your vision and work with you to find the most appropriate magnifier to optimise your vision. They will talk to you about adjustments you can make to the technology you use or discuss specialist technology that may help you.

The magnifiers are available on a free loan basis from the hospital eye service. They can be exchanged at subsequent visits if your vision or vision needs change.

Your hospital Optometrist works closely with the groups mentioned in this leaflet and can refer you to them if appropriate.

To access the visual aids service you need your GP, your Ophthalmologist (if you are under the hospital eye service) or your community Optometrist to refer you. You do not need to be registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired to use this service.

## **Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO)**

The ECLO is based at the Eye Hospital in Oxford. They will be available when you receive your diagnosis to give you emotional support and further information about the services available to you in Oxfordshire.

Referrals to see the ECLO are made by the Ophthalmologist or Optometrist in the hospital. If you would like to see the ECLO please ask at your next appointment.

## **Genetic counselling**

Sometimes, but not always, conditions that cause low vision are hereditary (run in families) and/or are caused by a genetic fault (problem with the instructions that build our bodies). Having a genetic condition in the family can raise questions and have implications, not only for you, but for others in your family.

At the Oxford Eye Hospital a specialist ophthalmic genetics clinic is available. This is supported by an Ophthalmic Genetic Counsellor (nurse or other professional with expertise in genetics). These clinics are aimed at answering your 'genetic-related' questions.

### **How might genetic counselling help me?**

The doctors and Ophthalmic Genetic Counsellor can help you in several ways:

- Making or confirming a diagnosis.
- Providing information about the eye condition.
- Discussing the risk, if any, that you may be affected by the condition in the future.
- Discussing the risk, if any, that your children may inherit the condition.
- Explaining what genetic tests might be available.

- Talking about the support available to you and ways of coping with the condition.
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If you have any concerns or questions about the genetics of your condition please discuss these with your Ophthalmologist or GP. If appropriate, they can make a referral to the ophthalmic genetics clinic.

## County council services

### Rehabilitation services

Rehabilitation services are provided by Social and Community Services, Oxfordshire County Council. They assess people of all ages who have sight loss and cover three key areas:

- **Independent living skills** (Including preparation of food and drink, advice on maintaining your home environment, lighting and leisure).
- **Communications** (Teaching you new skills such as using assistive technology and smart phone Apps; learning to use your visual aids and low vision techniques; talking books and task lighting).
- **Mobility** (Teaching you new skills to help you to get around safely - this may include learning how to use a long cane or short symbol cane, and teaching you how to get to the local shops or work safely).

They also offer advice on benefits and services available to visually impaired people. Please contact the team on the number below if you want to discuss how the team may be able to help you.

You can be referred to the rehabilitation service by either a letter from your GP; a "Letter of Visual Impairment" (LVI) from your high street Optometrist; or a Referral of Visual Impairment (RVI) or Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) from the hospital. Alternatively you can contact them directly using the details below:

## **The Visual Impairment Team (OCC)**

### **Social and Community Services**

Oxfordshire County Council  
Abbey House  
Abbey Close  
Abingdon, OX14 3JD

Telephone: **01865 894 935**

Email: **[visual.impairment@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:visual.impairment@oxfordshire.gov.uk)**

# My Vision Oxfordshire

My Vision Oxfordshire is a charity supporting anyone with a visual impairment to live an independent and active life.

## Services include:

- Information and advice
- Equipment demonstration and purchase
- Technology training
- Counselling
- Befriending
- Children, young people, and family's support
- Social activities and peer-to-peer support groups.

## Contact details:

You can visit the Resource Centre  
(Please book ahead to avoid disappointment):

## My Vision Oxfordshire

Bradbury Lodge  
Gordon Woodward Way  
Oxford, OX1 4XL

Helpline: **01865 725 595**

Email: **[info@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:info@oxeyes.org.uk)**

Website: **[www.oxeyes.org.uk](http://www.oxeyes.org.uk)**

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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