

Information for people with a visual impairment



Social Care Direct

Adults and Communities

Barnet Council

POST ROOM

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Website **www.barnet.gov.uk**

Our commitment to you

We are committed to providing a responsive and professional service. We promise that:

- You will be treated with courtesy and respect
- Your views will be taken into account when deciding on the services that you need
- You will be given full information about services
- Your privacy, dignity and individuality will be respected
- Your individual cultural and religious needs will be respected
- Your personal information will be treated confidentially and only shared with those professionals that need to know in order to provide good quality care.

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Introduction

Barnet Council's Adult Social Care services provide a wide range of services for people of all ages with a visual loss.

Rehabilitation Workers and Access Enablement Officers based in the Sensory Impairment Team focus on supporting people who are severely sight impaired (blind), sight impaired (partially sighted) or Deafblind.

The specialist workers can provide information, advice and support to any resident who has a significant visual loss.

Their aim is to help you understand your particular sight problem and work with you and your family, to find the best way of enabling you to maintain your independence and overcome some of the difficulties you may be experiencing.

If you have a visual impairment and live in the London Borough of Barnet, or know someone who does, this booklet gives you information about the services available to you.

What we can offer:

- An assessment of your needs
- Advice and information on local and national support and activity groups
- Advice and information on benefits
- Advice on employment issues
- Life skills training to enable you to continue to be independent within your home
- Mobility training to enable you to travel independently and safely outside your home
- Advice on how to overcome communication difficulties
- Low vision and lighting assessment to help you make the most of any residual vision you may have
- Advice on equipment and adaptations
- Advice on other social care services
- Advice on registration

Registration

If you have poor sight then it is a good idea to think about visiting your GP or Optician. This can help you get the practical support you need.

To register you will need to be certified as sight impaired (partially sighted) or severely sight impaired (blind) by a consultant ophthalmologist (eye specialist). If you are already attending an eye hospital or clinic, you should discuss certification with your specialist or you might prefer to talk it over with a hospital social worker first. Otherwise, you should ask your GP to refer you to a consultant ophthalmologist.

There are two categories of registration:

- 1. Sight Impaired (partially sighted)**
- 2. Severely Sight Impaired (blind)**

Being registered as severely sight impaired does not necessarily mean that you are totally blind or that you will become so. There are many degrees of visual loss.

The Sensory Impairment Team keeps a confidential register of sight impaired (partially sighted) or severely sight impaired (blind) people living in the London Borough of Barnet. This register helps us to find out what types of services people with sight problems need.

Registration is voluntary, and you do not need to be registered to receive a service.

Health benefits

If you need 'complex lenses' you may qualify for a voucher towards the cost of glasses (check with your optician whether you are eligible).

You can get help with NHS costs, including vouchers towards the costs of glasses and free NHS sight tests, if you receive Income Support, Guaranteed Pension Credit or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or if you have a low income. You are also entitled to free eye tests if you are aged 40 or over, and your mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter has been diagnosed with glaucoma or you been advised by an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) that you are at risk of glaucoma.

For more information, contact the Department for Work and Pensions Benefits Enquiry Line on:

Counselling

If you require professional help coming to terms with your visual loss, your GP can refer you for counselling sessions.

Alternatively, the RNIB offer a telephone counselling service:

Tel: 020 7391 2186

Tel: 0845 712 3456

Benefit information

If you are registered as severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted) you are not automatically entitled to any welfare benefits, and there is no special benefit or pension for people with a serious sight loss. However, severely sight impaired (blind) and sight impaired (partially sighted) people - depending on age and other circumstances - may be able to claim one or more welfare benefits.

Attendance Allowance

If you are over 65 years old and need supervision or help with personal care because of an illness or disability, then you may be entitled to claim Attendance Allowance. You can get Attendance Allowance even if you live alone, if no one is giving you help, or even if you would not accept any help.

Tel: 0345 6056055

Text Phone: 0845 604 5312

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people with long-term health condition or disability aged 16-64.

PIP is usually paid every 4 weeks. It is tax free and you can get it whether you are in or out of work. How much you get is not based on your condition, but how your condition affects you. You will need to have an assessment to work out the level of help you get. Your award will be regularly reassessed to make sure you're getting the right support.

Tel: 0845 850 3322 / 0800 917 2222

Text phone: 0845 601 6677

Carer's Allowance

If someone such as your partner, a relative or friend spends time looking after you, they may get Carer's Allowance, and / or the carer premium in income-based benefits. Even if you are visually impaired you may get one or both of these for looking after another person, for example, your partner. The person being cared for must be getting either Attendance Allowance or the middle or highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance.

Tel: 0845 6084321

Text phone: 0845 6045312

Employment and Support Allowance

Both Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid to people who cannot work because of an illness or disability have been replaced by a new benefit called Employment and Support Allowance. If you are already receiving Incapacity Benefit or Income Support when the new benefit is introduced you will continue to receive these benefits. Employment and Support Allowance will only be paid to new claimants.

Income Tax

If you are registered as severely sight impaired (blind) you may be entitled to an additional personal allowance before paying Income Tax. You will need to contact the local Revenue and Customs Department on:

Tel: 0300 200 3000

Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk

You may also wish to seek advice from the Department for Work and Pensions, the Disability Benefit Centre or Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Department for Work and Pensions, and Disability Benefit Centre

To make a new claim for primary benefits such as Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance and Job Seekers Allowance, please phone the contact centre:

Tel: 0800 055 6688 (free phone)

The Pension Service

Tel: 0845 60 60 265

Website: www.thepensionservice.gov.uk

Open: Mon - Fri 8am-8pm

Disability Benefit Centre (Wembley)

PO Box 31, London SW95 9BD

Tel: 0845 712 3456 (National Helpline)

Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)

Tel: 0844 826 9336 (advice line)

Website: www.barnetcab.org.uk

Open: Mon - Fri 10am-3pm

Finchley CAB

23-35 Hendon Lane, Finchley N3 1RT

Open: Mon, Wed and Thu 10am - 12.30pm

Grahame Park CAB

The Concourse, Grahame Park NW9 5XA

Open: Mon-Wed, 10am-12.30pm

Hendon CAB

40-42 Church End, Hendon NW4 4JT

Open: Mon-Thu 10am - 12.30pm and 1.30 - 4pm,
Fri 10am - 12.30pm

New Barnet CAB

30 Station Road, New Barnet EN5 1PL

Open: Mon, Tue, Wed and Fri, 10am-12.30pm

Clients are advised to arrive at least one hour before each session to be given an allocated time slot.

Concessions

Free BT Directory Enquiry Service

Visually impaired customers can apply for free direct enquiry services. You can still use the free service if BT is not your telephone company. To register for these services call **195**.

British Wireless for the Blind Fund

Free permanent loan of audio devices. Contact Middlesex Association for the Blind on **020 8423 5141**.

Free postage on items for the blind

Articles for the Blind is a service offered by Royal Mail for people who are registered as sight impaired. It allows specified letters and parcels to be sent first class post, free of charge. This includes braille, moon, audio books and large print items (over 16 font). Contact the RNIB on **020 7388 1266** or Royal Mail Customer Care on **0845 774 0740**.

Television Licence Fee

If you are registered severely sight impaired (blind), you are entitled to a 50% reduction in the television licence fee. Contact the TV License helpline:

Tel: 0844 496 6071

Website: www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Leisure concessions

Concessions are available to people who are registered, or people receiving certain benefits, for various leisure and recreational activities. For example, you may get a free ticket for the person accompanying you to participating cinemas, reduced price entry to museums and exhibitions and concessions from local libraries when taking out audio books and DVDs. Check locally about availability of concessions and take with you proof of your registration.

Help getting around

Freedom Pass

A Freedom Pass gives people free travel on buses, trains, trams, tubes and Docklands Light Rail services in London. It is paid for by your local council to help older and disabled people get around. If you are registered with a visual impairment or are over 60 you can apply for a freedom pass.

For more information and an application form, please contact the **Assisted Travel Team** on:

Tel: 020 8359 4131

Website: www.londoncouncils.gov.uk

The Disabled Person's Rail card

This rail card generally gives one third off the price of certain rail ticket types for the cardholder and one accompanying adult. Contact your local railway station, or contact the Disabled Persons Railcard Office on:

Tel: 0845 605 0525

Website: www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

North London Dial-a-Ride

Dial-a-Ride is a door-to-door multi-occupancy vehicle for disabled and older people who cannot use buses, trains and tubes. It can be used for many different journeys, for example shopping, visiting friends and family, doctor and dentist appointments and going out at night. If you are registered severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted), you are eligible to receive the service.

For more information, please contact London Dial-a-Ride:

Tel: 0845 999 1999

Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge Scheme is designed to help people with severe mobility problems who travel either as drivers or passengers, by allowing them to park close to their destination. If you are registered severely sight impaired (blind) you are entitled to apply for a Blue Badge.

For more information about this scheme, please contact the Assisted Travel Section on:

Tel: 020 8359 4131

Website: www.barnet.gov.uk/bluebadge

London Taxi Card

The London Taxi card scheme enables people with physical disabilities to travel in licensed black cabs for a reduced fare. If you are registered blind you are entitled to apply (you cannot apply if you are partially sighted).

For more information please contact the London Councils.

Tel: 020 7934 9791

Website: www.taxicard.org.uk

Local organisations

Barnet Association for the Blind

The Barnet Association for the blind provides a wide range of services to support people who have a visual impairment.

- **Home Visiting Service** - provides a range of activities including support for carers, reading post and writing letters, form filling, befriending, taking people to appointments, low level advocacy, getting people out of the house, shopping and monitoring welfare.
- **Hospital Information Desks** - based in the Eye Clinics at Barnet and Edgware Hospitals.
- **Computer Training** - covering keyboard skills, word processing, email and using the internet, as well as using specialised software.
- **Resource Centre** - provides a large range of equipment and information, demonstrations, assistance and guidance.

Tel: 0845 838 0480
Fax: 020 8429 7107
Email: info@aftb.org.uk
Website: www.aftb.org.uk

Barnet Borough Sight Impaired Group

This group is a voluntary organisation for people who are visually impaired.

They aim to:

- promote the welfare of blind and partially sighted people living in the Borough of Barnet.
- offer friendship, help and support to those with sight difficulties, especially those who have been recently diagnosed.
- raise awareness by lobbying government, social care and health providers.

A **Social meeting** is held on the first Tuesday of the month at St Mary's church hall, Hendon Lane N3 from 1.30-3.30pm.

Tel: 020 8200 5462
Email: office@barnetbsi.org.uk
Website: www.barnetbsi.org.uk

Barnet Talking Newspaper

Talking Newspapers can be delivered to your home completely free on a CD every week for you to hear about what's going on in your Borough. Listen to it as often as you like, and simply return it. There's no joining fee, no subscription fee, and no return postage fee. It's absolutely free.

Tel: 020 8883 8008

Barnet Blind and Partially Sighted Bowls Club

The club meets every Tuesday and Friday afternoon throughout the year. Coaching, equipment and transport are available.

For more information, please contact:

Tel: Wynne Hughesman 01582 766 328

Tel: John Evans 020 8958 7362

Barnet Torch Fellowship Group

A local Christian support group for and run by people with visual impairment. Regular meetings are held every 3rd Saturday at 3pm at the Valley Centre, Dollis Valley Way, Barnet.

Tel: 020 8441 3440

Employment

Job Centre Plus offers help and advice with employment issues. The Access to Work team assess people having difficulties whilst in employment.

- Raydean House, 5 Weston Parade, London EN5 1AH
Tel **020 8258 6502**
- 40 Ballards Lane, London N3 2BL
Tel **020 8258 3362**
- 10 Finchley Lane, London NW4 1DP
Tel **020 8732 3438**
- Access to Work - **020 8426 3110**
www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Blind in Business is a registered charity which helps blind and partially sighted people into their first job through Training & Employment Services. It is a free service.

Tel: **0207 588 1885**

Website: **www.blindinbusiness.org.uk**

E-mail: **info@blindinbusiness.org.uk**

Leisure activities

Computers

If you are having difficulty reading the screen, try adjusting settings for your computer using the 'Accessibility' section on your computer. There is specialist computer software available to help - the RNIB hi-tech team can advise you. Barnet Association for the Blind offers computer training. The Accessible Friends Network (TAFN) is a networking site specifically for visually impaired people.

- RNIB..... **020 7391 2280**
- Barnet Association for the Blind..... **020 8423 5141**
- TAFN..... **0845 838 2369**
- Jewish Care..... **020 8922 2000**

Reading

If you are having difficulty reading standard size print, there are alternatives to this in either large / giant print or recorded material. Local libraries will have a stock of large print and recorded books.

- RNIB talking books..... **0845 762 6843**
- Calibre talking books..... **01296 432339**
- Listening Books..... **020 7234 0522**
- RNIB helpline..... **0845 766 9999**
- Big Print News..... **0800 124007**
- Talking Newspaper Association UK..... **01435 866102**

Say Go!

Keeping fit and active has never been as easy or as fun for people over 55 living in Barnet. The Say Go! programme, which is being run by Age Concern Barnet with funding from Barnet Council, Sport England and local voluntary organisations, puts on a range of classes to suit your interests and ability.

For more information about the activities, please contact Lisa Dubow at Age UK Barnet:

Tel: 020 8346 0542

Website: www.barnet.gov.uk/activities-for-older-people

Sport

There are several groups that can help you find local contacts for a range of sports. Burnt Oak leisure centre runs some separate sessions for people with a disability.

- Burnt Oak leisure centre..... **020 8201 0982**
- British Blind Sport..... **0870 078 9000**
- London Sports Forum..... **020 7717 1699**
- Metro sports..... **01708 456832**
- Barnet Bowls..... **020 8958 7362**

Television / Theatre / Cinema

Some theatres and cinemas offer audio description which gives you a verbal commentary on scenery, costumes and action in the breaks between characters speaking. Contact the RNIB for further information. VOCALEYES provides a nationwide audio description for touring theatre shows. Discounted tickets may be available - ask individual theatres or cinemas. The Cinema Exhibitors Association (CEA) card entitles the holder to one free ticket for an accompanying person.

- **VOCALEYES..... 020 7375 1043**
- **RNIB.....0845 766 9999**
- **CEA.....0151 348 8020**

Other useful local services:

Advocacy in Barnet

The One Stop Shop, 4-5 The Concourse, Grahame Park
London NW9 5XB

Tel: 020 8201 3415

Email: admin@advocacyinbarnet.org.uk

Barnet Carers Centre

Barnet Carers Centre offer a wide range of services including advice, information, practical and emotional support to unpaid carers. They run:

- drop-in services
- a telephone helpline
- welfare benefits surgeries
- relaxation days, and
- 'stressbuster' evenings.

Global House, 303 Ballards Lane, North Finchley N12 8NP

Tel: 020 8343 9698

Fax: 020 8445 1193

Website: www.barnetcarers.org

Disability Action in the Borough of Barnet (Dabb)

This group offers information, advice and advocacy on topics such as access, welfare rights, housing, debt and equipment. The Independent Living Agency can help find personal assistants for those in need.

954 High Road, North Finchley N12 9RX

Tel: 020 8446 6935

Textphone: 020 8343 7632

Website: www.dabb.org.uk

Barnet Care and Repair Agency

Care and Repair are an advisory and support service which supports vulnerable older and disabled people who are owner-occupiers or private sector tenants to complete adaptations or repairs to their homes. Staff will:

- Visit you at home to carry out home safety and security checks, benefits checks and income maximisation
- Advise on the scope of adaptations or repairs, draw up plans and specifications and make applications for planning and building control permissions
- Assist in applying for available grants or other funding to pay for the work
- Help in obtaining estimates from reliable builders supervising works and arranging for payments to be made.

Tel: 020 8359 7462

Fire Safety in the Home

Officers are available at four fire stations in the London Borough of Barnet to offer advice and provide fire safety information. They can also provide and fit smoke detectors free of charge if required.

Local fire and community safety centre
1st Floor, Finchley Fire Station,
227 Long Lane, Finchley N3 2RP

Tel: 08000 284 428

Fax: 020 7587 2271

Email: barnetgroup@london-fire.gov.uk

Website: www.london-fire.gov.uk

National organisations

Action for Blind People

14-16 Verney Road, London SE16 3DZ

Tel: 020 7635 4800

Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Association of Blind Asians

Room 16, Zenith House, 210 Church Road,
Leyton E10 7JQ

Tel: 020 8558 6972

Email: info@aba-uk.org

Website: www.aba-uk.org.uk

British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society

PO Box 350, Buckingham MK18 1GZ

Tel: 01280 860363 or 0845 123 354

Email: info@brps.org.uk

Website: www.brps.org.uk

Deafblind UK

National Centre for Deafblindness,
John & Lucille Van Geest Place, Cygnet Road,
Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD

Tel: 01733 358100

Email: info@deafblind.org.uk

Website: www.deafblind.org.uk

Diabetes UK

10 Parkway, London NW1 7AA

Tel: 020 7424 1000

Email: info@diabetes.org.uk

Website: www.diabetes.org.uk

The International Glaucoma Association,
15A Highpoint Business Village,
Henwood, Ashford, Kent TN24 8DH
Tel **01233 648170**
Email **info@iga.org.uk**
Website **www.glaucoma-association.com**

Jewish Care

Merit House, 508 Edgware Road, London NW9 5AB
Tel: **020 8922 2222**
Email: **info@jcare.org**
Website: **www.jewishcare.org.uk**

The Macular Disease Society

Darwin House, 13a Bridge St, Andover,
Hampshire SP10 1BE
Tel: **01264 350551**
Helpline: **0845 2412041**
Email: **info@maculardisease.org**
Website: **www.maculardisease.org.uk**

Nystagmus Network (UK and Worldwide)

13 Tinsley Close, Claypole, Newark,
Nottinghamshire NG23 5BS
Tel: **01636 627004 or 0845 634 2630**
Email: **info@nystagmusnet.org**
Website: **www.nystagmusnet.org**

Organisation of Blind Afro-Caribbean's

1st Floor, Gloucester House, 8, Camberwell New Road,
London SE5 0RZ
Tel: **020 7735 3400**
Email: **info@obac.org.uk**
Website: **www.obac.org.uk**

Partially Sighted Society

Queen's Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN1 2NX

Tel: 01302 323132

Email: doncaster@partsight.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Blind

Customer Services Centre, PO Box 173,

Peterborough, PE2 6WS

Tel: 0845 702 3153 (cost of local call)

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Sense (National Association for Deaf-blind and Rubella Handicapped)

101 Pentonville Road, London N1 9LG

Tel: 0845 127 0060

Textphone: 0845 127 0062

Email: info@sense.org.uk

Website: www.sense.org.uk

Social Care Connect

You can find up to date information of local and national organisations which support people with a visual impairment on our online directory.

There is also an events calendar on our website which has a full list of upcoming events and activities taking place across the borough. You can also add your own event if you want to spread the word.

Website: www.barnet.gov.uk/socialcareconnect

Tell us what you think

It is important for us to know what we are doing well and what we need to improve. If you would like to give us your views about the service you have received, please contact the Complaints and Representations Manager:

Tel: **020 8359 4299**

Alternatively please write to:
Complaints and Representations Manager
Adult Social Care and Health
London Borough of Barnet
FREEPOST NAT 8011
London N11 1BR

Access to Records

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 you are entitled to know what personal information Adult Social Services holds about you, what the information is used for, and with whom this information is shared. Barnet Council has produced a policy to help social workers and other social care staff to record information in the best possible way.

This booklet is available on audio tape, CD, large print, Braille or alternative language.

To request your preferred format, please contact the Communications Officer for Adult and Communities on 020 8359 7150.