



## **Supporting staff with Visual Impairment**

### **What is Visual Impairment?**

Visual impairment is a loss of sight that cannot be corrected using glasses or contact lenses. Many visual impairments develop over time, and age-related eye conditions are the most common cause of sight loss in the UK. Impairment can include total loss of vision, a loss of central or peripheral vision, and blurred/patchy vision.

### **Common challenges associated with Visual Impairment**

The challenges encountered by individuals with visual impairment will depend on the degree and nature of the impairment. However, the most common challenges include:

- Difficulty navigating unfamiliar and/or busy places
- Requiring more time to read work documents and learning materials
- Difficulty accessing work information and training in a suitable format
- Difficulty accessing necessary equipment and software

### **How can staff get assessed?**

Formal diagnostic assessments are carried out by ophthalmologists and a GP referral is usually required for this. It is strongly recommended that individuals with visual impairment receive a workplace assessment from Access to Work or Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB).

### **Reasonable adjustments at work**

Effective adjustments will be specific to individuals. Ask the person what they find harder to do and what has helped previously. Adjustments to be considered include:

- Adapting working hours to allow travel during non-peak times

- Providing a screen magnifier and/or screen reader, and speech-to-text software to aid reading and writing
- Ensuring lighting levels are optimal for the individual
- Agreeing a suitable format for work documents and training materials
- Providing in advance any material to be read for meetings and training programmes, in a suitable format
- Allowing more time for tasks, or reassigning tasks to colleagues where appropriate
- Locating the individual's desk with a clear and simple route to the door
- Supporting the individual to organise their work area and computer settings in a way that suits them
- Avoiding use of 'hot-desking' for staff with visual impairment
- Supporting the use of an assistance dog in the workplace
- Scheduling regular breaks to avoid eye strain and fatigue

### **Health and safety considerations**

Where an individual has recently acquired a visual impairment, it may be necessary to conduct an individual risk assessment, specific to the job role and working environment.

Where an individual requires assistance during an emergency evacuation, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) must be put in place (<https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/fire-safety/fire-safety-provision/disabled-evacuation>).

### **External support:**

Access to Work – <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

Royal National Institute of Blind People – <http://www.rnib.org.uk>