



## **Functional Vision Assessment for People with Learning Disabilities**

## Introduction

Vision is the key to learning, communication and movement. Around 1 in 3 people with a learning disability have a sight problem. Unidentified sight problems can seriously undermine people's quality of life and lead to avoidable sight loss and increased dependency. Often very little may be known about how much a person with learning disabilities can actually see, therefore making it very difficult for carers to know how to support the person to make the best use of their vision. This is particularly important for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities who may find it difficult to communicate to others what they are able to see.

This Functional Vision Assessment was created by SeeAbility. It is intended to be used by supporters of people with learning disabilities who know that person well, such as family carers and support staff. This Functional Vision Assessment is an observational tool that can be used to recognise how a person with learning disabilities might be using their sight. It can give an indication of what a person might not see, or have difficulty seeing.

Many people with learning disabilities may not be able to tell others if they have a sight problem. A Functional Vision Assessment can be an effective way of recognising the sight difficulties people with learning disabilities might be experiencing. A Functional Vision Assessment is an excellent starting point for supporting someone to have a potential sight problem recognised by an eye care professional. The information gained from an assessment should be shared with the person's optometrist and with specialist workers for the visually impaired. Sharing information helps the person get the best support and advice.

### **The resources in this pack will:**

- Enable carers to find out more about what a person can see
- Enable carers to effectively monitor a person's vision between eye tests
- Identify questions to ask the optometrist during the person's next eye test
- Identify questions to ask Rehabilitation Workers for people who have a visual impairment
- Provide strategies to support the individual to make the best use of their vision

A Functional Vision Assessment can be carried out by observing a person in an environment they feel comfortable in, using everyday items which they are already familiar with.

## **This pack includes:**

- Easy to use Functional Vision Assessment checklists and a suggested list of items which can be used in the Assessment
- A format to summarise your findings and guidance on what action to take
- Guidance and support on eye tests for people with learning disabilities
- An eye care journey chart for people with learning disabilities and a glossary, which will help you to identify support and resources

**Only a qualified optometrist or eye care professional can provide a clinical eye examination. It is important to remember that this Functional Vision Assessment tool should not be regarded as a substitute for an eye test. It is crucial that people with learning disabilities have regular eye tests.**

## **About SeeAbility:**

### **Getting Further Support and Information.**

If you require any guidance or support on completing this Functional Vision Assessment please contact SeeAbility's Look Up team on 01372 755 066, email [info@lookupinfo.org](mailto:info@lookupinfo.org) or visit [www.lookupinfo.org](http://www.lookupinfo.org). SeeAbility's eye 2 eye team can also provide a range of training and advisory services on eye care, visual impairment and the needs of people with learning disabilities.

SeeAbility is a registered charity that works with young people and adults who are visually impaired with additional disabilities. SeeAbility provides residential and supported living, day services, rehabilitation services and information and advisory services. In 2005 SeeAbility launched the eye 2 eye Campaign to transform eye care and vision for people with learning disabilities in the UK. The eye 2 eye Campaign provides information, advice and support for people with learning disabilities, their families and carers, eye care professionals and health and social services staff. In 2007 SeeAbility launched the Look Up information service which provides information and advice to eye care and vision professionals on the needs of people who have a learning disability – and information and advice on the importance of eye care and vision to those who support people who have a learning disability.

## How to use the Functional Vision Assessment Checklists

In **Section A** there are seven checklists covering different areas of vision and eye health. We recommend that you view all seven sections on-line and then print off from [www.lookupinfo.org](http://www.lookupinfo.org) the individual sections of the Assessment that you wish to complete.

Once you have completed all of the checklists go to the summary in **Section B** which will explain what to do with the information you have gathered. The Functional Vision Assessment checklists included in this pack are:

- [Checklist 1](#)     **Appearance of the eyes** – the appearance of a person’s eyes may raise concerns about their eye health
- [Checklist 2](#)     **Behaviour** – a person’s behaviours may be related to poor vision or other eye care needs
- [Checklist 3](#)     **Poor central vision** – this is when a person cannot see straight ahead very well
- [Checklist 4](#)     **Poor peripheral vision** – sometimes a person has difficulties seeing to the sides and up and down
- [Checklist 5](#)     **Sensitivity to light** – some people experience difficulties because their eyes are very sensitive to light
- [Checklist 6](#)     **Poor colour vision (or contrast sensitivity)** – some people do not see colours very well and can find it difficult to see objects clearly against a background
- [Checklist 7](#)     **Poor vision in one eye** – some people have poor vision in one eye only

## About the Person

<b>Persons Name:</b>	
<b>Date of birth:</b>	-- / -- / ----
<b>Medical summary:</b>	
<b>Medication:</b>	
<b>Preferred methods of communication used:</b>	
<b>Other information:</b>	
<b>Name and role of person completing assessment:</b>	

## Summary of Findings

(Use this form to summarise your findings from all sections of this assessment)

Person's name:	
Date of birth:	--/ --/ ----
Person who completed the assessment:	
Date assessment was completed:	

Having made your assessment please tick the relevant boxes:

- Checklist 1** – I have concerns about the appearance of the person's eyes
- Checklist 2** – I have concerns about the person's behaviour
- Checklist 3** – I have concerns about the person's central vision
- Checklist 4** – I have concerns about the person's peripheral vision
- Checklist 5** – I have concerns about the person's sensitivity to light
- Checklist 6** – I have concerns about the person's colour vision / contrast sensitivity
- Checklist 7** – I have concerns about vision in the person's left or right eye

Please look back over each of the seven checklists that you have completed and summarise any areas of concern or interest that you may have. Now write a list of the strategies you are going to use to address the identified problems.

**Please summarise your concerns**

**Please summarise the strategies you think will support the person in using their functional vision**

**What have you learnt from your observations?**

You have made observations about the appearance of the person's eyes, their vision and their behaviour. You may have identified some potential vision and eye care concerns which will need to be checked. Please see the section '**Taking Action**' for advice as to what to do next with your concerns.

## Taking Action

This section will help you to decide what action to take regarding the information you have found out about the appearance of the person's eyes, their behaviour and vision. Please consider the information you have summarised and tick the relevant boxes below.

- 1)  **I have completed all seven checklists and have no concerns about the person's vision or eye health.**

In this instance, continue to support the person to have regular eye tests to monitor their ongoing eye health. Go to the guidance on frequency of eye tests.

- 2)  **I have completed all seven checklists and I have some concerns which are described in the summary of findings.**

You should now support the individual to seek advice from an appropriate eye care professional. Please refer to the "Eye Care Journey for People with Learning Disabilities" and the Glossary which explains the roles of different eye care professionals. Please take the full assessment along to the appointment so that you can talk about it and ask questions.

- 3)  **By carrying out this assessment, I believe that I have identified some useful support strategies which benefit this person. I now need to talk to a Rehabilitation Worker about these strategies and get further guidance and advice?**

Contact your local Social Services department to request a visit from a Rehabilitation Worker for a range of support.

- 4)  **I want to share what I have found with other people who support this person as they need to know how they can support the person in the best possible way.**

The information you have gathered about the person's vision and eye health should be shared with relevant people who need to know and recorded in the person's Support Plan / Communication Passport / Person-Centred Plan / Health Action Plan. This information and advice can then be understood and acted upon by everyone who supports this individual.

## Frequency of Eye Tests

### How often should someone have an eye test?

Around 1 in 3 people with a learning disability have a sight problem. Unidentified sight problems can seriously undermine people's quality of life and lead to avoidable sight loss and increased dependency. Therefore it is very important that people with learning disabilities have regular eye tests. As a guide, the following applies:

Age 0 – 16 years	eye test every year
Age 16 – 70 years	eye test every two years
Age 70 plus years	eye test every year

However, there can be exceptions to this guidance based upon individual circumstances, therefore consult an optometrist for further details.

**Date of the person's last eye test: \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_**

**Considering this persons age and professionally diagnosed eye health condition, they require an eye test every \_\_\_\_\_ years.**

**Date of the person's next planned eye test: \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_**

**If the person has never had an eye test or you are unsure of the date of their last eye test then please arrange a test as soon as possible.**

## Supporting the Person to have an Eye Tests

[www.lookupinfo.org](http://www.lookupinfo.org) has a range of materials to help you prepare someone for an eye test Including:

- An Optometrists and Opticians database which gives key information about practices and facilities in your area that are available for people with learning disabilities.
- 2 forms that will help people with learning disabilities have a good sight test:
  - “[Telling the optometrist about me](#)” which will help you to prepare for an eye test. This form will help the optometrist know all of the important things about the person you are supporting.
  - “[Feedback from the optometrist about my eye test](#)”. This form needs to be filled in by the optometrist at the end of the eye test. This form will help to share important information about the eye test and will help people to understand how the person sees best, why glasses have been prescribed and when they will help, what low vision aid or lighting has been recommended, why a referral to another service has been made

Please take the full completed Functional Vision Assessment along to the eye test so that you can talk about it and ask questions.

**It is important to remember that this Functional Vision Assessment tool should not be regarded as a substitute for an eye test by a qualified optometrist. It is crucial that people with learning disabilities have regular eye tests.**

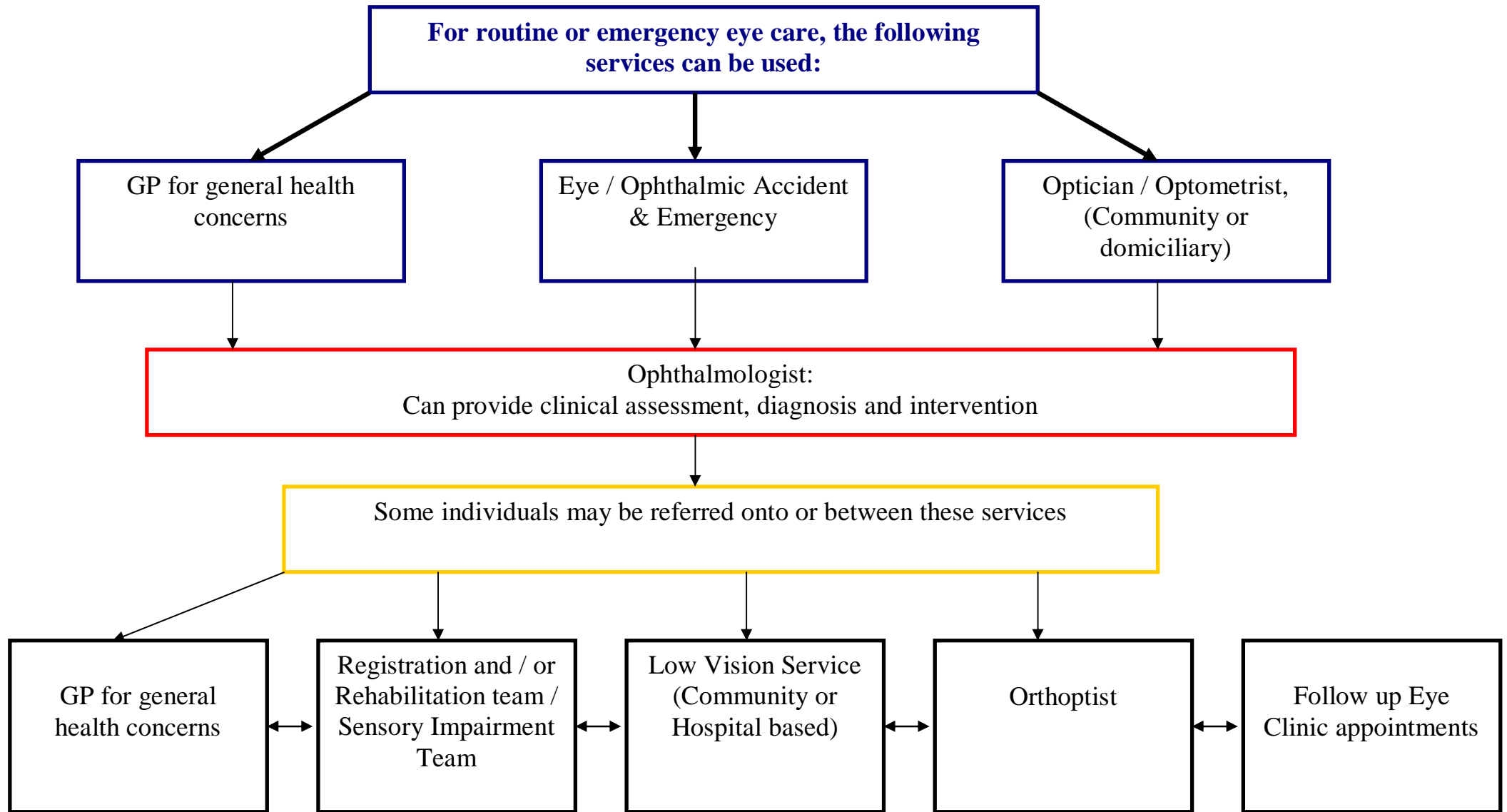
## Functional Vision Assessment Equipment List

This is a list of items which can be used in a Functional Vision Assessment. They are mostly everyday items which should be readily available in the person's home. When you carry out the assessment, you may think of other useful things to use – this is fine if it helps you to find out more about what the person can see!

- Anything bright or sparkly
- Biscuits / sweets e.g. smarties / hundreds and thousands
- Cups – bright and neutral colours
- Different coloured trays
- Different coloured straws
- Examples of print or symbols in different sizes
- Favourite personal items
- Meals (for observation)
- Paints and craft materials
- Penlight or maglite torches
- Pens and pencils for writing or drawing
- Pictures / photos
- Plates – good and poor contrast
- Sunglasses / peaked baseball cap / sun visor
- Tennis balls, rubber balls or similar
- Television or computer screen

# Eye Care Journey for people with Learning Disabilities

(please ensure that patient consent is addressed at each stage)



(Please note some organisations charge for their services)

## Glossary – What does it mean?

- **Eye / Ophthalmic Accident and Emergency** – deal with eye injuries and other emergencies. Usually based in a hospital
- **GP (General Practitioner)** - is a doctor who sees patients in surgeries or their own home in order to diagnose and treat medical conditions and to promote health. The GP is also a link to many other healthcare services
- **Hospital Eye Clinic** – is at the hospital where people can access ophthalmologists, orthoptists and low vision services
- **Low Vision Service** - are services to help a person see better by using lighting, magnifying glasses and other techniques and equipment. Low vision services can be provided by a hospital eye clinic, local voluntary societies for the blind, Rehabilitation Worker or optometrists
- **Ophthalmologist** – medically qualified doctors who treat eye problems. They are usually based in hospital eye clinics
- **Optician (dispensing opticians)** - are qualified to fit and adjust spectacles. Some are further qualified to fit contact lenses or low vision appliances from a prescription supplied by an ophthalmologist or optometrist. They work in high street premises or hospital eye clinics. Some opticians can visit people at home if they are unable to go to the practice
- **Optometrist** - are qualified to carry out eye examinations and advise on eye care and recognise abnormal conditions. They prescribe and fit spectacles, contact lenses and low vision appliances (such as magnifying aids). They work in high street premises or hospital eye clinics. Some optometrists can visit people at home if they are unable to go to the practice

- **Orthoptist** – is qualified to diagnose and treat problems related to binocular vision - such as squints, double vision, impairment of depth perception and so on. They mainly work with children but can also work with adults. They are usually based in hospital eye clinic and work alongside ophthalmologists
- **Registration as Sight Impaired or Severely Sight Impaired (also known as Partially Sighted or Blind)** - registration begins at the hospital eye clinic and is a formal recognition of someone having poor sight. Registration should be followed by an assessment (usually undertaken by a Rehabilitation Worker) to decide what support the person needs
- **Rehabilitation Worker** - professionally qualified person who supports people who have a visual impairment. Rehabilitation Workers are part of the rehabilitation team and they can be contacted via local Social Services Departments
- **Sensory Impairment Team** – Rehabilitation Workers are often a part of a Sensory Impairment Team in Social Services. These teams also support people with hearing impairments
- **Visual Impairment** –is when a person has significantly reduced vision due to the presence of one or more diagnosed eye conditions