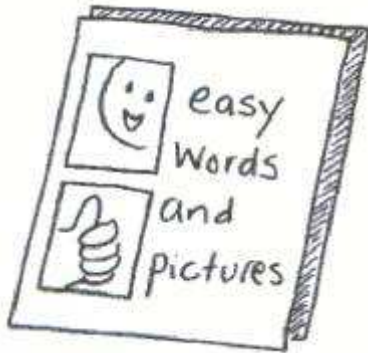




What do people think about eye are for people with learning difficulties?

Stephen Kill, SeeAbility eye 2 eye Development Officer West Sussex, July 2008



The Department of Health think that 1 in 3 adults with learning difficulties have problems with their sight.



Lots of people don't have an eye test.

So some people lose their sight.

We talked to lots of people from 2007-2008 to find out what needs to be done to make things better.

How this was done



Questionnaires were filled in by -

- 95 adults with learning difficulties
- 17 Managers in Social Care and Health
- 10 Support workers
- 20 family careers
- 14 Optometrists (people who test sight)

Stephen helped people to fill in the questionnaires.

Results

The results are under 4 headings.

1. Awareness (knowing) about eye care
2. The eye test
3. Awareness of visual impairment (not being able to see well)
4. Bringing about change.

1. Knowing about eye care





When did people have their last eye test?



- Some people hadn't had an eye test in the last 2 years
- People have Health Action Plans that should include eye care but -
 1. not everyone has an HAP
 2. eye care isn't in some HAPs
 3. people don't talk to anyone who can support them with sight problems.

Problems with glasses

- People need regular checkups. Their glasses may need changing
- People don't like their glasses
- People are teased about glasses
- Some glasses are uncomfortable
- People forget to wear glasses
- People don't understand how important it is to wear their glasses
- Glasses are lost or broken
- Glasses are broken by the person because they don't want to wear them
- People have more than one pair and don't know which pair they should be wearing

- Staff don't know the person wears glasses, so don't remind them to put them on
- The person wants to wear their old glasses

All of these things can be helped.

2. The Eye Test



Having a choice



People were asked if they wanted a choice of where to have their test.

Most people said 'yes' because -

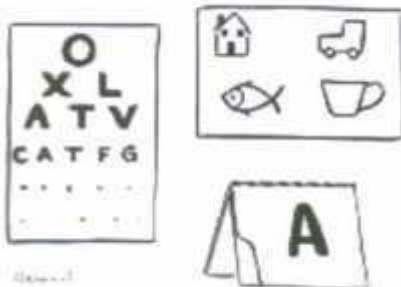
- They wanted to go to an optician a friend had used
- They wanted to go to a friendly optician
- They wanted to go somewhere near home.

What was good or bad about the eye test?



People are happy with their eye test if -

- The optician was friendly
- Was helpful



- Used accessible things to help with the test
- Gave them a choice about the glasses they had
- They could go on their own to the appointment
- The results were properly explained to them.

The opticians said the following things made a better test -



- How experienced the optician was
- Extra time for the appointment
- Being patient
- Using accessible materials for the test.

The opticians said the following things made the test bad -



- Sometimes people could not say how they felt because of their needs
- Some people found it difficult to take part and to be understood
- There wasn't always enough medical information

Opticians thought most tests went well.

3. Awareness (knowing about) visual impairment



Finding out when people have problems with their sight

We asked staff and families how they realise that someone is having a problem with their sight



- When they bump into things
- People have less confidence and stop taking part in things



- People become cross or unhappy and behave badly



No-one said having cloudy eyes or infections.

Working with people who have a visual impairment (poor sight)



Most people said that some people they worked with had poor sight.

Where did staff go for help?



- The community team
- The doctor

No-one said **4sight** - the local help centre for people with sight problems.

Equipment

We asked about things that would help people with poor sight like -

- Walking sticks
- Talking clocks
- Magnifying glasses

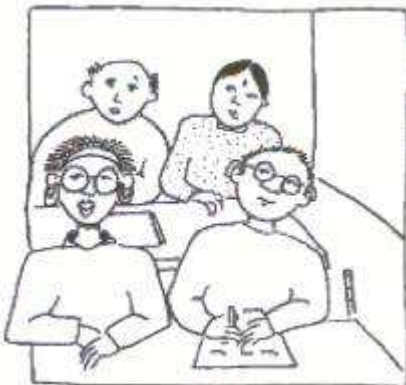
The answers showed there wasn't much equipment used and staff did not know how to use it properly.

4. Bringing about change



People said what needs to get better.

- Specialist services - especially for people with high needs



- More training for opticians about people with learning difficulties
- Regular eye tests for people with learning difficulties



- To make sure everyone knows about eye care for people with learning difficulties
- To make a list of opticians for people to use
- More information sharing
- More home visits and using different ways of testing
- Opticians want more money because the test takes longer. They also wanted to do some of the Low Vision work that the hospital eye clinics do.

What happens next?



The **eye 2 eye** Project will continue until November 2009.

It will look at the following things because of the results -

- Share this report with people in West Sussex

- Keep letting people know about the importance of eye care and wearing their glasses
- Make sure people use the Eye Test Form
- Make sure Opticians use the Eye Test Report
- Get more opticians to put their details on the **Look Up** website. Let more people know about the information on the website
- Make sure people know about the different ways of eye testing
- Make sure staff and opticians know about training
- Providing training for staff
- Make sure people know about organisations like 4Sight and the Worthing Society for the Blind that can help.