

# Preparing for an eye test

Our research shows that an estimated 579,000 adults with learning disabilities have refractive error - they are long or short sighted or they may be astigmatic. 6 out of ten people with learning disabilities need glasses. Everyone has the right to have an eye test. No one is too disabled to have his or her eyes tested. However, many adults with learning disabilities do not have regular eye tests.

In previous factsheets we have discussed how important it is that people receive quality eye care. In this factsheet we discuss how important it is to prepare for an eye test. For the eye test to be as successful as possible it is important that the person is given every opportunity to prepare for their visit to the optometrist / optician. For more information on the previous factsheet please read [The need for an eye test](#).



## Preparing to go to the optometrists

It is important for carers to know the individual being tested and what parts of the test they are able to do well. Are there parts of the eye test that may make the person anxious - such as having drops applied or somebody working close up to the person's face?

It can be useful to prepare people for some of the tests they may find difficult or uncomfortable, for example:

- Practice matching pictures. Your local social services visual impairment

rehabilitation team may have Kay Picture examinations you can borrow to practice. Alternatively contact SeeAbility's Information and Advisory team on 01372 755 000.

- Familiarise the person with air being blown on their face. This will help them to be prepared for the 'puffer' test which tests for glaucoma. This can be done simply by using a biro casing or a straw.
- Practice shining a small torch with a 'soft light' in the person's eye to get them used to someone being up close



and having a light shone in their eyes.

- Practice following a torch light, looking ahead at objects.

## What the optometrist needs to know

It is important for carers to tell the optometrist information that will help them complete a satisfactory eye examination. This information can be recorded on our [Telling the optometrist about me form](#).

The information that the optometrist needs to know:

- The person's date of birth.
- Do they receive benefits which would entitle them to a free eye examination and a voucher towards the cost of glasses? If yes, take evidence with you to the eye examination (people in Scotland and Wales get free eye examinations).
- Does the person have an identified eye problem?

# Preparing for an eye test - continued



- Does their sight seem to vary according to the time of day?
- Has their behaviour changed recently?

You will also need to consider sharing information about:

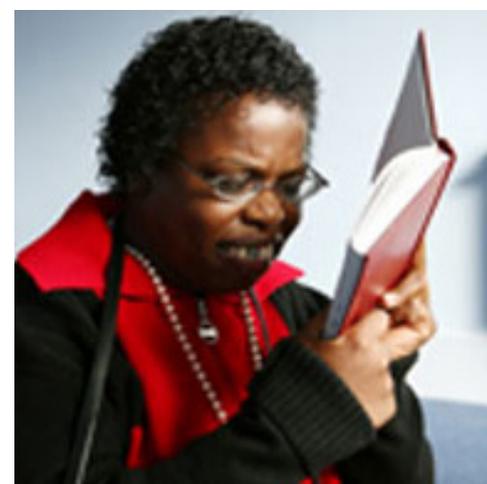
- How the person communicates with other people.
- The person having a hearing loss. Do they wear hearing aids?
- The person's concentration span.
- How person responds to strangers. For example, how do they react to people being in close physical contact?
- The person having behaviour described as being challenging to others. Are there guidelines in place to support them to manage their behaviour?

- What medication is the person taking?
- Has the person ever been seen by an ophthalmologist (eye doctor), optometrist, orthoptist or low vision clinic before and when were they seen?
- Does the person have glasses? When were they prescribed and what are they for? Do the glasses help and when does the person wear them?
- Does the person have any magnifiers or low vision aids?
- Make sure that you take all current glasses and any other low vision aids such as magnifiers to the appointment.
- Has the person ever had a severe eye infection, head injury or stroke?

- Does the person have any condition that might affect their vision? For example - diabetes, epilepsy, high blood pressure, sickle cell disease, and cerebral palsy etc.
- Is there any family history of eye problems for example glaucoma?

How does the person use their vision?

- Do they recognise people - at what distance?
- Do they make eye contact?
- Do they gaze into the distance?
- Do they hold objects close to their eyes? Can they focus on near (for example food) or distant objects?
- Do they do anything to see better - for example, put their head on one side, peer closely at things?
- What is their field of vision? Can they see all around?



# Preparing for an eye test - continued

All this information will be useful to the eye care specialist. It will add to their assessment of the person's vision – especially if the person has limited communication skills.

Remember to Complete the [Telling the optometrist about me form](#) with the person.

You and the person may choose to take the form to the optometrist in advance of the appointment.

## **Making the appointment with an optometrist**

If you need help finding an optometrist then go to our [Services in Your Area](#) database or ask staff or friends to recommend an optometrist.

Plan the appointment at a time of day that is best for the person.

It is important that the sight examination and eye health check is carried out in an unhurried way - people with learning disabilities may take longer to examine. If you think you may need a longer appointment then tell the receptionist when you make the appointment.

If necessary, check that the optometrist's practice is accessible for wheelchair users.

Ensure that the person is accompanied on the day by someone who knows them well.

Remember this is a medical appointment - often optometrists find that appointments for people with learning disabilities are cancelled at short notice. This sometimes happens because of good reasons, for example illness. However, sometimes appointments are cancelled because of poor staff planning. Each cancelled appointment costs the optometrist money. Consider whether you would be as likely to cancel a GP, dental or hospital appointment.