

Registration

as blind or partially sighted

Changes to the system for getting help from social services, November 2003

What is the new system?

The Government has announced a new system for registering people as blind or partially sighted, starting from November 2003. Registers are held by local council social services departments (or by voluntary organisations on their behalf).

A new form, the 'Certificate of Vision Impairment' (CVI 2003) will replace the BD8, which consultant eye specialists use to notify social services departments that someone is eligible for registration. Also, new standard referral letters can be issued by high street opticians and hospital eye clinics, to request help for you from social services. So people with sight problems (i.e. which cannot be corrected by glasses) should find it easier to get the support they need from social services even before they are registered or if they decide not to register.

The new system has been developed after wide consultation with people with sight problems and their advocates.

So how do I get help if I have a sight problem?

When you visit your high street optician they will be able to give you a referral letter, called 'Letter of Vision Impairment' (LVI 2003), which you can fill in yourself and send to your local social services. You will be able to give information about your circumstances, any difficulties or anxieties you have because of your sight problem and to ask for information about the services available to you. The address to where you should send the letter should have already been filled in. The letter comes with notes telling you where to get advice and information locally and nationally. As well as giving you this letter, your optician will probably arrange for you to be seen at your local hospital eye clinic by a consultant ophthalmologist. If you are not offered such a letter by your optician, or if you chose not to send it in to your local social services at that stage, you will have another opportunity to be referred for help from the hospital eye service. Hospital eye clinic staff can fill in a form, 'Referral of Vision Impaired Patient' (RVI 2003), with your consent. This form will tell social services about your situation, request an assessment of your need for support and state how urgently they think you require help. You do not have to wait until your treatment at the clinic has ended. If your sight has deteriorated to a certain level, you may be eligible to be registered with your local social services department. The eye specialist must complete the form 'Certificate of Vision Impairment' (CVI 2003) to notify social services that you are eligible to be registered. The new form is easier to complete, so should speed up the

registration process. This form should also trigger an assessment of your needs.

Registration is optional, but is useful as it may entitle you to certain benefits and concessions, and helps your local council to plan and provide the appropriate level of services. Your local council should also offer you a registration card confirming that you have been registered.

How is this system better?

Under the old system, help from social services was often not provided until they had received the BD8 form from the hospital. Even then, there were often long delays before contact was made. The new system should make it easier for people to let social services know what difficulties they are having and to request information and support as soon as it is needed.

Changes to terminology

For registration purposes, the term 'blind' now becomes 'severely sight impaired/blind' and 'partially sighted' becomes 'sight impaired/partially sighted'.

When will the changes start?

The new forms are available for use from November 2003. However, the old form BD8 will not be phased out immediately, and will still be accepted by social services.

We welcome the changes. The new system gives people with sight problems the opportunity to get support at an early stage, when they need it most. Getting help and advice when difficulties are first identified can make all the difference to someone's independence.

Important note

If you are having difficulties because of problems with your sight you are entitled to an assessment of your needs by social services. The referral letters and forms described in this fact sheet have been developed to make it easier for people to obtain specialist help provided by social services. However, you are entitled to ask for help without going through the new system. There is nothing to prevent you from contacting your social services department directly.

Further Information

For further information about the benefits of registration and social security benefits contact:

Information and Support Services
Action for Blind People
14 - 16 Verney Road
London SE16 3DZ

Tel: 0800 915 4666
Fax: 020 7635 4900
Email: info@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

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RNIB Welfare Rights Services
105 Judd Street,
London WC1H 9NE
Telephone: 0845 766 9999
Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Copies of the new referral letters and registration forms can be found on the Department of Health website:

www.doh.gov.uk/sensoryimpairment



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