

## INFORMATION SHEET

### **WHO'S WHO!**

Below is a glossary of the names of the professional people you may come into contact with in the Visually Impairment world:-

### **THE PAEDIATRIC OPHTHALMOLOGIST**

The Ophthalmologist is the doctor who specialises in the treatment and diagnosis of children's eye conditions. Paediatric Ophthalmologists treat eye conditions with both medicines and by surgery.

### **THE OPHTHALMOLOGIST**

The Ophthalmologist specialises in eye conditions, in both adults and children, and helps with diagnosis and treatment. Ophthalmologists treat eye conditions both with medicines and by surgery.

### **THE ORTHOPTIST**

The Orthoptist assesses the development of vision and treatment of eye movement disorders in children, most commonly squints. The Orthoptist sees children, normally, within the Eye Department in a Hospital, following diagnosis by the Ophthalmologist and appointments are usually on a regular basis. The Orthoptist will treat squint patients with spectacles and patching and may undertake other diagnostic roles, particularly diagnosing and monitoring glaucoma.

### **THE OPTOMETRIST**

The Optometrist is trained to detect abnormal eye conditions and defects of eyesight. Optometrists report to the General Practitioner and to the Eye Specialist when they detect and abnormal ocular condition. Optometrists prescribe spectacles to treat eyesight defects.

### **THE OPTICIAN**

The Optician is someone who dispenses spectacles to correct errors of the focusing system of the eye following assessment of the level of sight.

## **THE HEALTH VISITOR**

The Health Visitor is a trained nurse who may be able to provide you with a list of experts and their contact details in your area. The Health Visitor normally visits you and baby at home and can be very supportive in identifying visual impairment and in the encouraging of your General Practitioner to take further action.

### **THE MEDICAL OFFICER**

The Senior Medical Officer is employed by the local Health Authority and will need reports from one or more of the following, a Paediatrician, a Consultant Ophthalmologist or any other Doctor involved, towards contributing to an assessment.

### **THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST**

The Occupational Therapist is aware of the unique educational needs of the visually impaired, particularly with regard to sensory and motor skills (e.g., writing). The Occupational Therapist assesses the sensory, perceptual, social and emotional well-being of the child and through activities and play helping to maximise the child's abilities, leading to greater self-esteem and independence. Occupational Therapists can provide advice on equipment and adaptations to your home to promote independent living.

### **THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST**

The Physiotherapist can suggest routines to help development with regard to crawling, walking posture and the encouragement for visually impaired children to move confidently and to help develop good muscle tone.

Children with other physical problems the Physiotherapist can advise on aids to help development.

### **THE SOCIAL WORKER**

A Social Worker may be allocated to you. The Social Worker can help with any problems with regard to the whole family, which may arise in the early months and years associated with your visually impaired child.

### **THE AREA EDUCATION OFFICER**

Large Local Education Authorities (LEA's) usually have Education Offices. The Area Education Officer has overall responsibility for managing LEA education in the area.

### **THE EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGIST**

The Education Psychologist is employed by the Local Education Authority and is also a qualified teacher, the Education Psychologist is the person who will assess a child's learning disabilities and social skills and often co-ordinates assessments of children for Statements.

### **THE PERIPATETIC TEACHER**

The Peripatetic Teacher is a qualified teacher of visually impaired children who provides support and advice to parents, teachers and statementing officers, throughout the child's school years and will visit at home or at the

school your child attends. The Peripatetic Teacher will follow your child throughout the education years.

### **PORTAGE WORKER**

Portage is a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children, providing support to your child assisting with the development of play, communication and relationships, by providing a programme to build on . Portage Workers are not available in all areas of the UK. The Senior Clinical Medical Officer normally arranges a Portage Worker.

### **REHABILITATION/MOBILITY OFFICER**

The Rehabilitation Officer helps to train the visually impaired in life skills, both indoors and outside, for example, how to cross roads, making a cup of tea.

### **SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST**

The Speech Therapist helps individuals who may have difficulties with the development of language and communication skills and advise on feeding and swallowing difficulties.

### **STATEMENTING OFFICER**

The Statementing Officer is usually employed at the Head Office of the Local Education Authority, Special Needs Unit and is responsible for the issuing of Statements of Special Educational Needs.

**Disclaimer: Information sheets have been produced to provide information and advice for the parents of visually impaired children. Changes may occur in theories and legislation, however, the information sheets have been written in good faith, as a general guidance tool. If you have any questions with regard to issues raised by the information sheet, please contact the National Blind Children's Society, National Family Support and Information Manager.**