

The low vision clinic

Optometry Department

Information for patients and carers

• Home • Community • Hospital
Caring for you

What is low vision?

Low vision means changes to your vision that cannot be fully improved with:

- glasses
- contact lenses
- surgery
- medication

It can make daily tasks harder such as reading, recognising faces and moving around safely.

Living with vision loss can be challenging. There are tools and techniques that can help you stay independent and improve your quality of life.

This leaflet explains the support available from the low vision clinic. It also summarises information given during the low vision clinic assessment.

Low vision aids

Low vision aids are devices that help people with vision loss. They help you make the most of your remaining vision for greater independence.

Low vision aids come in many types.

Types of low vision aids

- **optical aids** – such as magnifying glasses, telescopes, binoculars and high-power reading glasses
- **electronic aids**
- **non-optical aids**

Not all aids are suitable for everyone. Your optometrist (eye care professional) will recommend the aids they think will help you the most during your assessment.

Optical aids

How to use a stand magnifier

1. Place the magnifier flat on the page or text
2. Sit in a well-lit area
3. Sit comfortably and support your back and neck
4. Use the in-built light if available
5. Hold the magnifier and text close to your eyes. This will increase the area possible to see
6. Move the magnifier or the page slowly as you read

How to use a hand magnifier

A hand magnifier is a portable tool that helps make text and objects larger.

To use it:

- use good room lighting
- turn on the in-built light, if available, to light the page
- place the magnifier flat on the page, text or object and slowly lift it until the image is sharp and clear
- keep the magnifier steady
- rest your elbow or hand on the surface to improve control
- slightly tilt the magnifier to reduce glare
- Keeping the distance between the page and the eye the same, bring the magnifier and page close to your eyes to see more of the page

How to use MaxTV and MaxDetail binocular glasses

These are hands-free magnifiers worn on the head like glasses.

- Put the glasses on so they feel comfortable.
- Turn the wheel on the side to adjust the lenses until the image is clear.

MaxTV glasses are best for things far away, such as television.

MaxDetail glasses are good for close tasks, such as reading or crafting.

What to do if you have problems with your magnifier

Contact the low vision clinic if you find your magnifier hard to use. You may need another assessment to find a better option.

Please return any unused magnifiers to the department, so they can be used by other patients.

What if my magnifier isn't working?

If the light on the magnifier does not work, even after changing the batteries, contact the Optometry Department.

They can help with repairs or replacements. The department does not provide replacement batteries.

Non-optical aids

These are simple changes that can make your daily life easier. Things to consider:

- use large print materials or increase the size to make reading easier
- make things darker can increase the contrast
- improve the lighting with task lighting and daylight bulbs
- use anti-glare filters and sunglasses
- sit closer to the television
- keep items in the same place
- use raised markers, braille labels or textured stickers to help identify objects or locations
- use textured flooring to help with direction

Help with writing

If you are finding writing difficult, you may find it helpful to:

- write in larger letters
- use black pens on white or yellow paper
- use bold black pens – such as high-contrast, felt-tip or gel pens
- use lined or bold-guided paper
- use raised writing guides
- use a signature guide – that helps position your signature
- consider using screen readers, speech-to-text software or digital magnifiers to help with writing

Electronic aids and technology

Unfortunately, electronic aids are not provided by the NHS.

This includes screen readers, reading machines and handheld video magnifiers. Your optometrist may be able to advise where to find more information.

Using technology to support vision loss

Audiobooks

- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Talking Books
- Listening Books
- Calibre Audio

These services offer books in accessible formats, including streaming, downloads, and delivery of memory sticks.

Audio-based support

These devices can provide helpful information and support daily tasks. Voice-activated devices such as:

- smart assistants
- screen readers
- talking clocks
- GPS navigation apps

Adaptive kitchen tools

These tools can support you to prepare food. Such as:

- Liquid-level indicators
- talking scales
- textured grips

Built-in accessibility

Most smart phones, computers and electronic devices have in-built accessibility settings.

Further information

Local support

- **Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) – Tom Gough**
ECLOs offer practical and emotional support to people with sight loss, including families and carers.
They provide help with staying independent, learning about eye conditions, and getting benefits and concessions
Location: Warrington Hospital, Lovely Lane, Warrington, WA5 1QG
Phone: 07762 001167
Email: ncm.eclo@nhs.net
- **Warrington Sensory Support Service**
A support service for people with sensory impairments in the Warrington Borough.
Address: Integrated Services, New Town House, Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 2NH
Phone: 01925 442 917
- **Halton Sensory Services**
A support service for people with sensory impairments in the Halton Borough.
Address: Halton Sensory Service, 126 Widnes Road, Widnes, WA8 6AX
Phone: 0151 511 8801
- **Warrington VIP (Visually Impaired People)**

A local charity offering support, social activities, and resources for individuals with sight loss.

Address: Fairfield Street, Warrington, WA1 3AJ

Phone: 01925 632 700

Website: www.warringtonvip.co.uk

- **Vision Support**

A charity, based at Halton Sensory Services Centre, providing support and assistance for visually impaired.

Email: referrals@visionsupport.org.uk

National support

- **RNIB – Royal National Institute of Blind People**

RNIB provides extensive support, advice, and resources for individuals with visual impairments.

Phone: Helpline on 0303 123 9999

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Contact details

- **The low vision clinic**

Address: Optometry Department, Ophthalmology, Daresbury Wing, Lovely Lane, Warrington WA5 1QG

Phone: 01925 662 485