

connecting
you

Driving Change for
People with disabilities
in Devon



Public & Community Bus Driver Disability Awareness Training Manual



Devon in Sight
Your local sight loss charity

in partnership with
Devon
County Council 

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Editors

Grahame Flynn &
Jennie Benham

Contributors

Karen Rose
Devon County Council

**Grahame Flynn &
Tessa Barrett**
Devon in Sight

Tim Lamerton
North Devon Voluntary
Services

Leila Manion
Living Options Devon

Credits

Alzheimer's Society,
Brighton & Hove Bus and
Coach Company Ltd.,
Department for Transport,
Equality and Human
Rights Commission,
Devon in Sight, Guide
Dogs, Inclusive London,
Living Options Devon,
MENCAP, RNIB & Royal
College of Ophthalmology,
Scope, SLT UK, Stagecoach
South West.

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Welcome



Welcome to the 'Connecting You' Disability Awareness Training Manual.

Post COVID-19 many public and community bus operators have struggled to find the time to release their staff to undertake professional development training.

This training manual has been prepared as a practical guide for Public and Community Bus Drivers to raise awareness of some of the barriers people living with disabilities experience when accessing transport. This training has been a collaborative piece of work by a number of Devon charities in partnership with Devon County Council.

Lead partner Devon in Sight is an **Approved CDP Group Provider**. This mark offers 3rd party assurances that our training is of the highest possible standard while offering you a mechanism to evidence your ongoing professional development, which can also contribute to your 35 hours of required Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) provision. **This course has been awarded five CPD credit hours.**

You can access a digital version of this manual, the video tutorials and order your Certificate of Completion online by following the QR link on page 61.

We hope that you find this training informative and enjoyable.



Grahame Flynn
Chief Executive Officer
Devon in Sight

For support please ring the Devon in Sight Helpline on:

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Tackling Loneliness with Transport



▲ Photo Credit: Real People Group (iStock)

Millions of people across the nation are struggling with feelings of loneliness, which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Devon County Council was one of twelve organisations across England that were awarded funding in 2022 through the Department for Transport's 'Tackling Loneliness with Transport' Fund.

The aim of the funding was to understand how transport could play a role in helping people who are feeling lonely. The pilot projects operated until the end of July 2023.

The Devon pilot, **Connecting You**, focused on two beneficiary groups particularly affected by loneliness. These are Young People aged 16 to 24 and the over 55s. Learning from the pilots will be used to inform how future transport schemes can contribute to reducing loneliness in communities.

"Loneliness is unfortunately something that can affect us all and is all too prevalent in society today.

The Connecting You project has enabled us to trial a series of innovative schemes designed to target support in communities across Devon. Our pilot programme was designed to help combat loneliness in Devon through transport opportunities, and try to make life a little brighter for residents.

Transport is often forgotten about when implementing new ideas or programmes to help people, and it's sometimes also seen as a barrier to participation. Our initiatives helped our target audiences of the elderly and young adults, and also reached deeper into communities to help those who really need support.

Each project has been measured and evaluated rigorously, enabling the Department of Transport to understand more about how transport can be used to help reduce loneliness and share findings with organisations within and outside government."



Councillor Andrea Davis
Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport



Driver Disability Awareness Training

One of the many Connecting You projects was Bus Driver Disability Awareness Training.

We know that since the Covid pandemic, there are many passengers who are anxious about using public and community transport.

Devon County Council, partnered with Devon in Sight (The Devon County Association for the Blind), Living Options Devon and North Devon Voluntary Services to help our smaller & medium sized commercial bus operators and community bus schemes to design and deliver a first-rate Disability Awareness Training Programme.

The **Driver Disability Awareness Training** recognised how critical the role of the bus driver is to a passenger's journey experience. We wanted to help drivers to overcome their own concerns about offering help to passengers with protected characteristics such as disability.

The training programme aimed to raise awareness of anti-discrimination law and the issues facing people living with a range of disabilities and the barriers to accessing transport.

We hoped the bus companies CEO's, maintenance staff, office staff and drivers would get involved, to encourage awareness training throughout their organisations and so that knowledge is not lost when staff move on.

It's so important that all transport staff understand disability and the often small adjustments that can make all the difference for passengers living with a disability.



▲ Photo Credit: Monkey Business Images (iStock)

What was the outcome of the training?

Bus Driver Training was delivered in Exeter, Newton Abbot, Barnstaple and Tavistock. Staff who participated in the training increased their knowledge and skills and became more knowledgeable when offering support and assistance to passengers living with a disability. Bus staff including drivers also gave feedback on how passengers could better support drivers.

Why have we designed this training manual?

Despite the Tackling Loneliness with Transport Funding coming to an end in July 2023 we were keen that the project had a lasting legacy.

We appreciate that post COVID-19 many public and community bus operators are struggling to find the time to release staff to undertake disability awareness training.

This manual aims to bring together some of the key elements of training from the course together with some videos to help you understand better the issues facing disabled people living in Devon today.

We hope our Bus Driver Disability Awareness Training will help remove barriers for people with disabilities who wish to use public and community transport and ultimately help them reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

Source: Devon County Council **Connecting You**

Meet the Experts

Devon County Council, partnered with Devon in Sight (The Devon County Association for the Blind), Living Options Devon and North Devon Voluntary Services to design and deliver the Driver Disability Awareness Programme.

Meet the Experts

Tessa Barrett
Head of Services, Devon in Sight

Tessa has over 20 years of experience working in the third sector, 10 years of which have been supporting people with low vision and their families.

Prior to joining Devon in Sight in 2022 Tessa was the Head of Services for the national charity The Macular Society and CEO of Hampshire Sight.



▲ Tessa Barrett

Grahame Flynn
Chief Executive Officer, Devon in Sight

Grahame has led Devon in Sight for over ten years, working tirelessly developing services and building relationships with partner agencies to ensure that people who are blind or partially sighted in Devon receive the best possible services.

Under his leadership Devon in Sight has won two national Visionary Awards for Inspirational Service delivery.



▲ Grahame Flynn



Tim Lamerton
Project Manager, Devon Access to Services, North Devon Voluntary Services Ltd.

Tim joined NDVS in 2005 to work for a Community Transport project in Ilfracombe and is now Project Manager for Devon Access to Services. He works with Community Car Schemes across the county supporting their work helping people otherwise excluded from transport get to the appointments and services they need.



Leila Manion
Engagement Manager & Disability Champion, Living Options Devon

Leila started to work for Living Options Devon in 2017. Across both her roles she ensures that disabled and other diverse voices are heard by organisations and commissioners to make sure that Accessibility matters and is understood by everyone.



Karen Rose
Community Transport Adviser, Public Transport Team, Devon County Council

Karen has been working for Devon County Council for over 30 years, supporting Devon's community and voluntary sector to develop and run community transport services that help people get to local shops, services, medical appointments or leisure activities where no alternative or suitable transport is available.



▲ Tim Lamerton



▲ Leila Manion



▲ Karen Rose

The Social Model of Disability

The last hundred years has been a time of huge social change, which helped to create a society where many more people were treated equally.

The Two Models of Disability

There are two very different interpretations of the term “disability”.

The Medical and Charitable Models of Disability

The traditional view is that disability is caused by a physical, mental or sensory impairment. Using this definition, it can be argued that, for example, sight loss affects a person’s ability to see and therefore disables them. In response, services and equipment can be offered to help the person with the disability live independently.

The Social Model of Disability

Another way of interpreting the term disability is to say that it’s not the “impairment” that causes disability, but the barriers that are put up by other people. Being pitied, ignored and patronised are all common experiences for disabled people. These attitudes create a huge barrier to independence and the creation of an inclusive society.

Such attitudes go hand-in-hand with other barriers that exclude disabled people from participating in mainstream social life. For example, simple information like a bus timetable that can’t be read makes planning a journey difficult, and employers who are reluctant to employ anyone with any kind of disability places unacceptable barriers in the way of employment opportunities.

This view is called the “social model” and helps focus people’s attention on the social barriers that exist. **It puts responsibility on everyone to break down barriers that deny disabled people the same opportunities as non-disabled people.**

‘The Social Model of Disability holds that people with impairments are ‘disabled’ by the barriers operating in society that exclude and discriminate against them.’

Using both models

Both the medical model and the social model have their place in helping society to make sense of disability, as disability is a combination of medical and social factors.

For example, a person with sight loss may need a medical approach in the form of:

- emotional support to deal with the impact of loss of sight.
- support to develop their skills which will enable them to keep their job or train for a different job.

At the same time the person may also need society to remove barriers such as:

- employers who are sceptical about considering employing a person with a disability.
- inaccessible information.
- transport systems that are impossible to use because buses and trains do not announce stops and assistance is difficult to arrange.

It should always be a disabled person’s needs that dictate whether a medical or social approach to their disability is most relevant at any particular time.

Source: Inclusive London, UK Government Equalities Office, Scope & RNIB

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 replaced existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplifies the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier.

The Equality Act is a law which protects people from discrimination. It means that discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of certain personal characteristics, such as disability, is against the law in almost all cases.

Who has responsibilities?

The Act applies to all organisations that provide a service to the public or a section of the public (service providers). It also applies to anyone who sells goods or provides facilities. It applies to all your services, whether or not a charge is made for them.

What are protected characteristics?

The Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of 'protected characteristics' (these used to be called 'grounds').

The relevant characteristics for services and public functions are: **disability**, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

What does the Act prohibit?

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects those who have at least one of the protected characteristics from discrimination. There are four main types of discrimination; Direct Discrimination, Indirect Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation.



'As providers of a service, you and your bus company must ensure that reasonable adjustments are pro-actively in place'

Direct Discrimination

Direct Discrimination in services and public functions happens when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination (extended to disability and gender reassignment)

Indirect Discrimination happens when there is a rule, a policy or even a practice that applies to everyone but which particularly disadvantages people who share a particular protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination can be justified if it can be shown that the rule, policy or practice is intended to meet a legitimate objective in a fair, balanced and reasonable way. If this can be shown it will be lawful. When considering introducing a new rule or policy, you should first consider whether there is any other way to meet your objectives that would not have a discriminatory effect or that is less likely to disadvantage people who have a protected characteristic.

Remember that a lack of financial resources alone is unlikely to be a sufficient justification.

Harassment

There is no specific prohibition on harassment related to religion or belief or to sexual orientation.

However, if you harass someone because of their religion or belief or their sexual orientation, and consequently treat them less favourably than you would treat someone else, a court would count this as direct discrimination, which is unlawful.

Source: UK Government

The Equality Act 2010

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when someone is treated badly because they have done something in relation to the Equality Act, such as making or supporting a complaint or raising a grievance about discrimination, or because it is suspected that they have done or may do these things. A person is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

Discrimination arising from disability

The protected characteristic of disability applies to a person who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The World Health Organisation (W.H.O.) defines Impairment Groups as:

People living with Sensory Loss (Sight or Hearing Impairment), Muscular/Skeletal Speech and Language, Progressive (Dementia or Parkinson's), Auto Immune (Lyme Disease or Lupus), Organ Specific (Asthma/Cardiovascular), Developmental (ADHD/ Autism), Mental Health (Anxiety and Depression) and Learning Difficulties.

Discrimination arising from disability occurs when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and this unfavourable treatment cannot be justified.

Treatment can be justified if it can be shown that it is intended to meet a legitimate objective in a fair, balanced and reasonable way. If this can be shown then the treatment will be lawful.

This form of discrimination can occur only if the service provider knows or can reasonably be expected to know that the disabled person is disabled.

'As providers of a service, you and your bus company must ensure that reasonable adjustments are pro-actively in place'

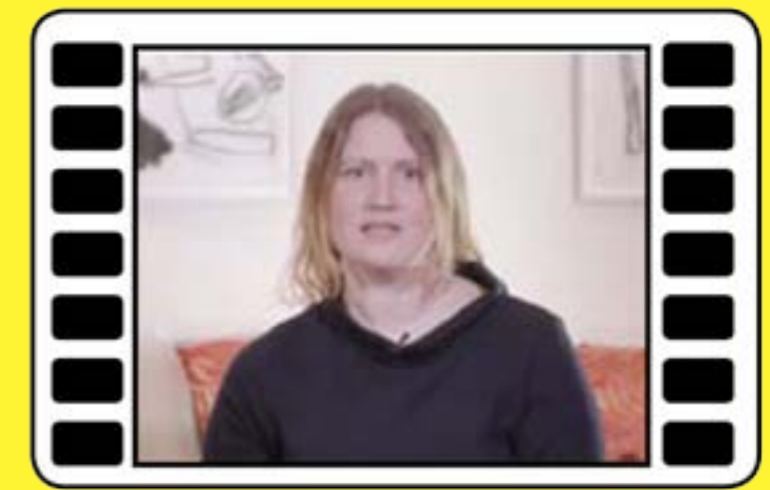
What are Reasonable Adjustments?

For disabled people there are additional protections including discrimination arising from disability and importantly the failure to make reasonable adjustments. **As providers of a service, you and your bus company must ensure that reasonable adjustments are pro-actively in place.**

Training Video 1

Equality Law: Discrimination Explained -
What is the duty to make reasonable adjustments?

(Duration: 6 minutes & 17 Seconds)



LINK: <https://youtu.be/Wb5tM6CrkIs>



Source: UK Government

General Disability Quiz

1. How many people in the UK have a disability?

- A) 19.6 Million B) 14.6 Million C) 12.6 Million

B) 14.6 Million (1 in 5) people.

Answer

2. How many people use a wheelchair in the UK?

- A) 1.2 Million B) 1.6 Million C) 1.9 Million

A) 1.2 Million (1 in 50 people).

Answer

3. Is someone who spends their entire daily life in a wheelchair 'wheelchair bound'?

No, they are wheelchair users!

Answer

4. What percentage of people have a hidden disability in the UK?

- A) 65% B) 12% C) 70%

C) 70%

Answer

5. Can you name some hidden disabilities?

Chronic Pain, Epilepsy, Colour-blindness, Arthritis, Asthma, Heart Disease, Chronic Pain, Cancer, HIV and AIDS

Answer

General Disability Quiz

6. What percentage of people find accessing public buildings difficult?

- A) 12% B) 63% C) 78%

C) 78%

Answer

7. Is a person a 'sufferer' of their disability?

Example: He suffers with mental health?

Not necessarily, people use different terminology, suffering can seem negative to some.

Answer

8. Who is allowed to use an accessible toilet?

Anyone.

Answer

9. How many people have hearing loss in the UK?

- A) 8 Million B) 3 Million C) 11 Million

C) 11 million (1 in 6 People)

Answer

10. What percentage of the public (67.89 million) feel uncomfortable speaking to a disabled person?

- A) 13% B) 51% C) 67%

C) 67%

Answer

Source: Living Options Devon

What your passengers say!



▲ Photo Credit: kovaciclea (iStock)

The following quotes are some of the common issues that are raised by passengers on buses with Disability Charities in Devon.

"I am a wheelchair user. Why do people talk to the person pushing the wheelchair and not me?!"

"Are bus drivers aware of the fact that Wheelchair users have priority over everyone else for the use of the designated wheelchair space on a bus?"

"Many bus drivers drive off before I have sat down in my seat. I find this very frightening!"

"I sometimes struggle to find my words. I hate it when people finish my sentences!"

"I'm visually impaired. I can't see the destination board and number until the bus is going past."

"Many bus drivers drive off before I have sat down in my seat. I find this very frightening!"

"The thing I find most difficult is the ignorance of other people towards sight loss. They don't understand the problems and immediately think of white canes, guide dogs and dark glasses – if you don't have those, people seem to question your authenticity as having a visual impairment".

"The problems I encounter in everyday life revolve around public transport, seeing numbers on buses and when they drive past without stopping. Information boards are frustrating because they are difficult to read, hailing taxis is difficult."

"I was standing at the bus stop last week. I was holding out my Devon Access Wallet, had a Guide Dog with me and the Bus drove past me!"

"Bus services are not very helpful, unless you have a white cane, the staff look at you as if you are stupid. I feel like I have to take a white cane with me for people to take me seriously as a blind person, and not simply think of me as a stupid person."

"My wife has early onset dementia. She still goes to the shops on the bus alone. Sometimes the drivers don't make an audible announcement about the next stop. She gets confused easily. I often get a call from a stranger saying they have found my wife in a different part of the city."

Source: 'Public Transport: The Barriers' by RNIB, Devon in Sight Annual Survey 2022, Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company Ltd., and Alzheimer's Society.

Supporting Wheelchair Users



▲ Photo Credit: Jordi Ramisa (iStock)

'1.2 Million people use a wheelchair in the UK'

Designated Wheelchair Spaces

Wheelchair users have priority over everyone else for the use of the designated wheelchair space on a bus since this is the only place in which they can travel safely. Non-wheelchair users, unlike wheelchair users, will normally have a choice about which part of the bus to sit or stand in.

Common decency and respect for wheelchair users should mean that other passengers make way for them. Passengers are urged to offer cooperation in allowing proper use of the designated wheelchair area.

If the wheelchair space is occupied with a buggy, standing passengers or otherwise full, and there is space elsewhere in the vehicle, the driver should ask that it is made free for a wheelchair user. Where a pushchair or buggy is occupying the space, the driver should ask that it is repositioned, moved to another part of the bus, or folded and stored in the luggage space, where available.

If passengers do not respond to such a request, without good reason, and the bus is not full, the driver should advise passengers that they are required to move from the wheelchair space. **The driver should consider other action such as not setting off from the stop until the situation is resolved.**

Source: Living Options Devon

For Disability Support please ring Living Options Devon on:

Tel: 01392 459 222

www.livingoptions.org.uk

Top Tips for supporting passengers who are Wheelchair Users

- Always speak to the wheelchair user, not directly to the person they are with.
- Don't overcrowd the person or their chair, equally do not start pushing the chair without offering assistance first.
- Do not feel tempted to lean on their chair.
- When speaking to a wheelchair user either sit with them, or ask them if they mind you standing?
- Ask if they would like you to carry something for them, they may be using their hands to self-propel.

Supporting People with Hearing Loss

'Travelling by bus if you are Deaf or Hearing Impaired can be a challenge!'



▲ Photo Credit: Lari Bat (iStock)

What is Deafness or Hearing Loss?

Deafness or hearing loss is a difficulty hearing or recognising sounds.

Hearing loss happens when a part of the ear or hearing system doesn't work properly. This can be temporary or permanent.

There are different levels of hearing loss depending on how loud sounds need to be for you to hear them. There may also be some sounds that you hear better or worse than others. For example, you can be partially deaf (able to hear some sounds), or profoundly deaf (very little or no hearing).

There are lots of different terms for hearing loss, including partially deaf, profoundly deaf, hearing impaired, hard of hearing and D/deaf. People with a hearing loss will make their own choice about which term to use.

Some people describe themselves as “Deaf” with a capital “D” to express pride in their Deaf identity. It's important to remember that many don't see their deafness as something they would like to be “cured”.

With the ever-increasing cost of motoring the bus is back in vogue with many commuters. Travelling by bus if you are deaf or hearing impaired can be a challenge but there are ways of making things run as smoothly as possible.

Top Tips for supporting passengers who are Deaf or hearing impaired:

- Always speak to the person who is Deaf or has a hearing impairment, not the interpreter.
- Speak clearly, do not shout.
- If lip reading is being used, resist the urge to over exaggerate your lip movements, this isn't helpful.
- Make sure the person can see your face, and make sure your mouth is not covered this makes lip reading easier.
- Learn a few British Sign Language signs, a smile helps too.

Source: Living Options Devon

For **Disability Support** please ring **Living Options Devon** on:

Tel: 01392 459 222

www.livingoptions.org.uk

Supporting People with Speech Disorders



▲ Photo Credit: Drazen (iStock)

What is a Speech Disorder?

Speech disorder is a term which describes several conditions affecting an individual's ability to create and form speech sounds correctly.

A speech disorder can range from mild to severe. In more severe cases an individual may be completely unintelligible. Speech disorders affect an individual's ability to communicate effectively in a variety of settings including the home, work and social environments.

Common Speech Disorders include:

Cluttering is also known as 'speech organisation disorder'. People with this disorder may have speech that is difficult to understand and often have rapid speech as well as erratic intonation.

'Speech disorders affect an individual's ability to communicate effectively in a variety of settings.'

Stuttering also known as 'stammering' is a disruption to the flow of speech and can vary in severity depending upon each individual's difficulty.

A lisp is a speech impediment and often results in a client having difficulty in producing the sounds 's' and 'z'. This results in the client substituting these sounds for a 'th' sound.

A speech sound disorder is when people have difficulty articulating sounds and using correct phonological processes. In adults this can include people who have suffered a stroke or head injury.

Dysarthria is a motor speech disorder which is caused by damage to the nervous system. The neurological damage will cause the muscles used for speech to become weak or uncoordinated.

Top Tips for supporting passengers with Speech Disorders:

- Maintain eye contact.
- Speak clearly, listen and wait for the person to finish.
- Resist talking for the person or finishing their sentence.
- Do not make assumptions about what the person is wanting to say.
- If you don't understand what they are trying to say, ask for them to repeat what they have said or repeat back what you think they have said and wait for a confirmation.

Source: SLT UK

For Disability Support please ring Living Options Devon on:

Tel: 01392 459 222

www.livingoptions.org.uk

Supporting People with Learning Disability



▲ Photo Credit: Sturti (iStock)

What is a Learning Disability?

A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life.

There are different types of learning disability, which can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. In all cases a learning disability is lifelong.

“Being able to travel means more freedom, a more active social life, and broader job opportunities.”

Mencap

Having Accessible Transport helps people living with a Learning Disability get to college, work, the doctor, a friend’s house – and accessible transport can transform someone’s life.

‘Being able to travel means more freedom, a more active social life, and broader job opportunities.’

That means clear signs and timetables, easy-read information, trained customer-facing staff, accessible toilets, priority seating and ramps. Without these accessible services, life can be a lot more difficult.

Top Tips for supporting passengers with a Learning Disability:

- Do not make assumptions.
- Speak clearly, don’t shout and use simple clear language.
- Be patient, give the person extra time and listen.
- If you don’t understand what they are saying, ask them to repeat the question. Repeat what you think they have said back.
- Check they have understood what you have said. Go over the topic again and adjust what you have said.
- Avoid the use of leading questions.
- Consider that the person may have addition impairments.
- Where possible provide accessible information in different formats, pictures, information passports etc.

Source: Living Options Devon & Mencap

For Disability Support please ring Living Options Devon on:

Tel: 01392 459 222

www.livingoptions.org.uk

Understanding Dementia



▲ Photo Credit: Laura Belova (iStock)

‘Being able to travel means more freedom, a more active social life, and broader job opportunities.’

Four things you should know about dementia

1. Dementia is not just about memory loss

Memory problems are a common early sign of dementia, but not for everyone.

2. Dementia is not a normal part of ageing

We all forget a name or a face sometimes, especially as we get older. But the changes caused by dementia are different and more serious.

3. Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain

Dementia is a group of symptoms. It’s caused by different diseases that damage the brain and stop it from working properly.

4. People can still live well with dementia

Although there is no cure for dementia yet, scientists and researchers are working hard to find one.

How does Dementia affect people?

Dementia affects people in different ways, depending on the type of dementia. The impact can be physical, emotional and psychological, and can also profoundly change the practicalities of everyday life.

Dementia is a progressive and incurable disease of the brain. It starts small but can become huge. However, in between, it is possible to live a good life with dementia. But other people are vital to help achieve this.

- 900,000 people in the United Kingdom have dementia.
- It is estimated that 13,000 people are living with dementia in Devon but this is set to rise to 16,000 by 2025.
- Statistics show that less than half (47%) of people living with dementia feel a part of their community (Alzheimer’s Society, 2013), and 28% said they have given up even getting out of the house.

What can we do to support people affected by Dementia?

Dementia is one of the greatest challenges we face in society today. All businesses can contribute to tackling the social and economic impact of dementia.

“While no one can change the outcome of dementia or Alzheimer’s, with the right support you can change the journey.”

Tara Reed, Alzheimer’s Society

Source: Alzheimer’s Society

For Dementia Support please ring Alzheimer’s Society on:

Tel: 0333 150 3456

www.alzheimers.org.uk

Understanding Dementia

'These powerful videos will help you understand how Alzheimer's affects people.'

WARNING

The videos that you are about to watch can be very challenging if you have a loved one who is living with Dementia. However, they give you a very good insight into how Dementia affects the person and how you can support passengers with Dementia.

Training Video 2

Dementia Friends - Bookcase Analogy

An explanation of how Alzheimer's affects people.
(Duration: 6 mins 16 Secs)



LINK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQ9uSR22qkl>



Training Video 3

Dementia Friends - Getting Around

A powerful video of a bus journey for a woman with Alzheimer's
(Duration: 3 minutes & 18 Seconds)



LINK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9xwkRMfWt8>



Dementia-Friendly Bus Travel

Being able to travel by bus can be a key factor in helping people with dementia retain their independence and live well.

Here are our **Top 10 Tips** for Bus Drivers to help deliver Dementia Friendly Bus Travel.

1. Be patient

Give people time to find the right method of payment when they are boarding or if they are checking route information. Patience and understanding can help people living with dementia feel comfortable and use bus services more often.

2. Make clear announcements

Make clear announcements to keep passengers informed when routes are disrupted or changed. Let people know what is happening, answer any queries and where to go to get support.

3. Lower the step

Use the lower step or ramp facility if you see someone who looks like they might need extra support at an approaching bus stop. This can make someone feel more confident and at ease when getting on and off the bus.

4. Remember – not every disability is visible

Be aware of hidden disabilities. It might not be apparent why someone is having difficulties but showing understanding will make a big difference for them.

5. Take your time

Give passengers time to sit down before driving off. A few extra seconds can make people more comfortable and help minimise injuries on your bus.

'Being able to travel by bus can be a key factor in helping people with dementia retain their independence and live well.'

6. Signpost priority seating

Support passengers by signposting priority seating when available and familiarise yourself with any badges, cards and local accessibility schemes.

7. Be approachable

Put your passengers at ease. Be friendly, make eye contact and smile when they are boarding the bus. This can not only make them feel valued but will make you more aware of everyone getting on.

8. Don't rush disembarking

Wait a bit longer to make sure everyone has the time they need. It might take people affected by dementia and their carers slightly longer to get off the bus, especially if the bus is crowded.

9. Build connections

If you have regular passengers, take the opportunity to say 'hi' and connect with them. You can be a lifeline to a person with dementia who is feeling isolated.

10. Be a Dementia Friend!

You can improve your awareness and understanding of dementia by requesting a Dementia Friends Information Session for you and your colleagues.

Source: Alzheimer's Society

For Dementia Support please ring Alzheimer's Society on:

Tel: 0333 150 3456

www.alzheimers.org.uk

General Disability Etiquette

'These are some basic recommendations and suggested etiquette.'



▲ Photo Credit: izusek (iStock)

This page offers some general guidelines and best practices for interacting with people with disabilities.

These are basic recommendations and some suggested etiquette. Use your best judgement and common sense and consider the personal preferences of the person with whom you are interacting.

- **Introduce yourself.** When meeting a person with a disability, act in the same manner as you would with a person without a disability.
- **Speak directly to the person.** Always speak to the disabled person, not directly to the person they are with or their assistance dog!
- **Maintain comfortable eye contact** - situate yourself in front of the person and at an equal height.

- **Use common sense.** Treat adults as adults. If meeting a person with a disability for the first time, treat them with the same level of formality as you would anyone else.
- **Slow down** - people with disabilities often need more time.
- **Don't make assumptions.** Be aware that a person may have disabilities other than the obvious for example a hearing or visual impairment.
- **Avoid intrusive questions.** Do not ask questions about a person's disability unless it is brought up by the person.
- **Before providing assistance, always ask the person if they would like assistance and how you can help.** Do not insist on helping if the person does not want it, and do not take it personally if the person declines your offer. You also should not touch a person's adaptive equipment (i.e., wheelchair, cane, crutches) or service animal unless specifically asked to do so.
- **Do not be afraid to talk.** When dealing with a person with a disability, do not hesitate to engage them in conversation like any other customer.
- **Do not be afraid to make a mistake. Be yourself.** If you make a mistake, apologise and ask if there is a better way to communicate or interact.

Source: Living Options Devon

For Disability Support please ring Living Options Devon on:

Tel: 01392 459 222

www.livingoptions.org.uk

Understanding Sight Loss



▲ Photo Credit: Mark Kuiken (iStock)

When we talk about people with sight loss, we mean people who have an eye condition which seriously affects their daily lives. More than two million people in the UK are living with sight loss. Of these, about 365,000 people are registered as blind or partially sighted.

Blind and partially sighted people can feel cut off from the people and things around them. This is compounded by inaccessible information, difficulty with everyday tasks such as shopping for groceries and problems navigating pavements or using public or community transport.

“Many people and businesses do not seem to care that information in print and in visual format is useless to me. If more information were accessible, I’d feel more included in society and able to be more independent.”

Visually Impaired Person (RNIB Research Project 2009)

‘More than 2 million people have sight loss in the United Kingdom.’

Many blind and partially sighted people have reduced opportunities to do the things they would like to take part in.

This includes general leisure pursuits, and things like sports and fitness, civic and cultural engagement, and access to volunteering opportunities.

The Emotional Impact of Sight Loss

People living with little or no sight face multiple challenges. Loss of sight, whether sudden or gradual, is a major life event, and a person experiencing it may go through a range of emotions, which could include anger, fear, frustration, grief, and sadness.

As well as dealing with their emotions, they must find ways to adapt to their changing circumstances and deal with the attitudes and behaviours of others, for example their family, employer, health professionals and the general public.

The person will also need to learn how to talk about their sight loss, how to ask for help when necessary and how to respond in different situations.

In this section we will deal with:

- **Some facts about sight loss and popular myths.**
- **Help you understand what people with sight loss may see.**
- **How you might recognise a person living with sight loss.**
- **Some Top Tips for supporting with Blind and Partially Sighted passengers.**
- **My Sighted Guide Training.**

Source: RNIB & Devon in Sight

Sight Loss Facts and Myth Busting

'More than 2 million people have sight loss in the United Kingdom.'

Fact

More than two million people have sight loss in the United Kingdom.

This level of sight loss is severe enough to have a significant impact on their daily lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left the majority of these people feeling less confident leaving their homes and less comfortable asking for help.

Fact

Every day 250 people start to lose their sight

This is equivalent to one person every six minutes.

True or False

Most blind people can't see anything at all.

False: Only about four per cent of the registered blind population see nothing at all. Most people have some residual vision.

True or False

80 per cent of all blind and partially sighted people are aged 60 or over.

True: One in 12 of us will become blind or partially sighted by the time we are 60 and this rises to 1 in 5 by the time we reach 75 and one in two by the time we reach 90.

True or False

Blind and partially sighted people will want to feel your face to find out who you are.

False: This is a myth. If a person wants to find out about you they will ask you!

True or False

75 per cent of blind and partially sighted working age adults are unemployed.

True: Unfortunately, this is true. Employers are legally required to make adjustments and provide assistance to people via assistive technology and adaptations.

Fact

In Devon there are an estimated 50,910 people living with sight loss.

This includes around:

32,700 people living with mild sight loss (64%)

11,280 people living with moderate sight loss (22%)

6,950 people living with severe sight loss (14%)

Source: RNIB Sight Loss Data Tool

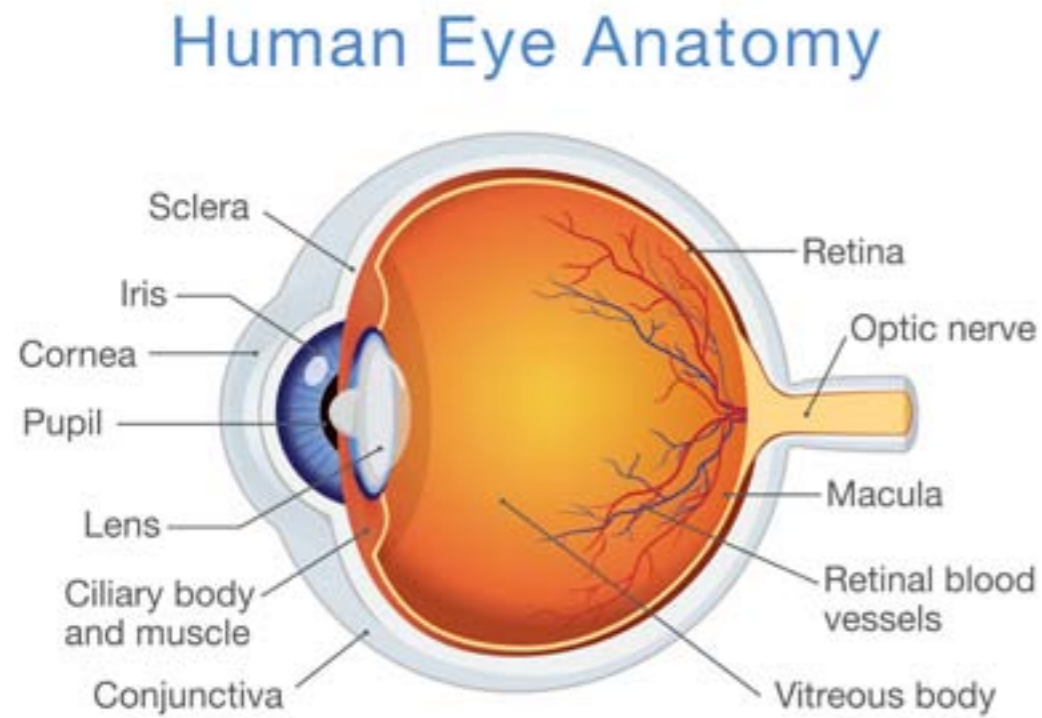
For Sight Loss Support please ring Devon in Sight on:

Tel: 01392 876 666

www.devoninsight.org.uk

What do people with sight loss see?

'There are many different eye conditions which can cause partial sight or blindness.'



There are many different eye conditions which can cause partial sight or blindness.

Being registered sight impaired or severely sight impaired (Blind) doesn't always mean total sight loss. The following simulations can give you an insight into some of the eye conditions that people with sight loss live with every day. However, only people experiencing these conditions know what it is really like.

A simple question for you.

Can you imagine a person living with sight loss waiting for a bus? How can they distinguish the bus from other motor vehicles or see the bus number or destination?

▲ Photo Credit: Solar 22 (iStock)



Normal Vision



Uncorrected Refractive Error

1. Normal Vision

Having 20/20 vision means you have normal or average vision. If you have 20/20 vision, you can see clearly at 20 feet what should normally be seen at a distance.

2. Uncorrected Refractive Error

Errors that could be corrected with spectacles or contact lenses but have not been. **39% of the two million people living with sight loss.**

The four most common refractive errors are:

Near sightedness (Myopia), Far sightedness (Hyperopia), Presbyopia (Being unable to focus on objects that are close to you. This normally happens when you get older and Astigmatism (some part of your eye has an irregular curve).

Uncorrected Refractive Error is the main cause of vision impairment in the UK and represents

Source: Devon in Sight & Royal College of Ophthalmology

What do people with sight loss see?

'There are many different eye conditions which can cause partial sight or blindness.'



Macular Degeneration

3. Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)

An eye condition resulting in the loss of central vision. It's the leading cause of sight loss for people over 50 in the UK. **23% of the two million people living with sight loss.**



Diabetic Retinopathy

4. Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic Retinopathy causes patchy vision and many experience a lack of sharpness in their vision. **5% of the two million people living with sight loss.**



Glaucoma

5. Glaucoma

Glaucoma can be caused by increased pressure in the eye. This damages the optic nerve resulting in loss of peripheral vision. Glaucoma affects two in 100 people over the age of 40. **7% of the two million people living with sight loss.**



Cataract

6. Cataract

A cataract is an eye condition where the lens part of the eye becomes cloudy leading to blurred vision and increased light sensitivity. **9% of the two million people living with sight loss.**



Retinitis Pigmentosa

7. Retinitis Pigmentosa

Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) is the most common inherited eye condition. It causes peripheral vision loss and visual field narrowing, vision loss in low light levels. It affects around one in 4,000 people in the UK.



Total Sight Loss

8. Total Sight Loss

Total sight loss can mean the loss of all vision. Often shades of light and dark are still visible. **Only about 4% of people who are registered as severely sight impaired can see nothing at all.**

Recognising someone with Sight Loss

'Not everyone chooses to make their sight loss evident to others.'



Guide Dogs

Guide Dogs are assistance dogs trained to lead people who are blind or visually impaired around obstacles.

It is a common misconception that most blind people have a Guide Dog.



Sighted Guide

A Sighted Guide is someone who has received training on how to guide a person with sight loss, with confidence, skill and empathy.



Visual Impairment Badge

Visual Impairment Badges are worn on clothing.

They normally have black text over a yellow background. The exact wording can vary. Examples include: I have a Visual Impairment, Partially Sighted, Visually Impaired Person (VIP) or just the Blind Person Icon.



Eye Shields

Eye shields are designed to exclude harmful ultraviolet (UV) and blue light, which can damage the retina.

A **Sun Visor** shields someone's eyes from harmful ultraviolet (UV) light.



Disability Lanyards

Disability Lanyards enable people with non-visible disabilities to access the support they need. It acts as a prompt for someone to choose to let people around them know they have a non-visible disability.



Mobility Canes

Mobility Canes come in a range of styles and are a form of mobility aid which help aid visually impaired pedestrians get about their daily business. If a cane has red stripes on it, then this signifies that the person also has a hearing impairment as well as sight loss.

Blind or Partially Sighted Passengers

'If modern life was set up in a way that was accessible for people with sight loss, then they would not be excluded or restricted.'

If modern life was set up in a way that was accessible for people with sight loss, then they would not be excluded or restricted.

There is a lot you can do to help break down barriers blind and partially sighted people face. We have detailed some of the challenges and the simple things you can do that will make a difference to them. We can all help make the world more an inclusive place.

People who are Blind or Partially Sighted shared their Top Tips for supporting passengers with little or no sight.

They said:

"Did you know: people with sight loss don't have to 'look blind'. I am not training my guide dog! Even though I am looking at you and appear fully sighted, I am not and can't see your expressions. Sight loss is different for everyone, so it's best not to make assumptions about what people can and can't see."

"If you have a question for me, please ask me directly rather than asking whoever is with me; I can, and do, speak for myself."

"As someone with sight loss, it can be hard to initiate conversation, it's hard to pick up non verbal cues. So one of the best things you can do is to be friendly and talk to Blind or Partially Sighted people normally."

"Please don't feel sorry for me or talk to me in a pitying tone. Yes, sight loss is challenging, but pity doesn't help me or make me feel good about myself."

"It really helps me know the name of the stop we are approaching."

"Before providing assistance, always ask me if I would like assistance and how you can help. Do not insist on helping if the person does not want it, and do not take it personally if the person declines your offer. You also should not touch a person's adaptive equipment (i.e. long cane or Guide Dog) unless specifically asked to do so."

"If you point at something, the chances are I can't see it. Why not just tell me what or where or who you are pointing at instead? Also, to point and say "it is over there" to me is not particularly useful; it is far more helpful to give me a description instead. For example, "the bus stop is about 20 feet ahead of you if you carry on in a straight line, there is a bin about halfway there which you will need to walk around" gives me much more information as I can't see where 'over there' is!"

"Don't worry about saying things like 'look' or 'see', this is normal language and I am not offended by the use of words related to vision. You don't have to change your language when you talk to me. I 'watch' TV, can 'see' your point of view and will often 'look' into things. It's fine to say 'its nice to see you.'"

"Please do not pull away until I have sat down in my seat."

Source: Devon in Sight, RNIB and Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company Ltd.

My Sighted Guide Training

'Helping you to act with confidence when you meet someone who is Blind or Partially Sighted.'

Sighted Guide Training

Guide Dogs can provide you and your colleagues with online My Sighted Guide Training which teaches you how to guide an adult with sight loss and helps you to act with confidence when you meet someone who is blind or partially sighted.

This training is ideal for anyone who is keen to learn the basics of how to guide an adult with sight loss.

- How to start a conversation when you meet someone who is blind or partially sighted, to ask if they need assistance.
- Basic guiding techniques for crossing roads, getting around obstacles and getting in and out of cars.
- An introduction to common eye conditions and their impact.
- Awareness of access rights and barriers to independence.
- By learning some simple sighted guiding techniques, you'll be well on your way to providing help confidently and safely whenever needed. A maximum of 18 people can attend a live session.

You can find out more by visiting:

www.guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/sighted-guidetraining/

The following video is a short, engaging watch that will leave you with the confidence to step up and help if a person with sight loss needs you.

Training Video 4

Sighted Guiding - Top Ten Tips

(Duration: 12 minutes & 44 Sec)



LINK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjybTi7WexI>



Source: Guide Dogs

The Devon Access Wallet Scheme

Many people find travelling by public transport can be a little daunting to use and find the experience stressful and isolating.

They lack the confidence to travel independently.



The Devon Access Wallet Scheme has been developed to help make journeys by bus or train easier for anyone with communication difficulties, people with disabilities, deaf people and those whose first language is not English. It also gives transport staff a better understanding of the requirements of all disabled passengers.

Devon County Council has worked in partnership with First Devon & Cornwall, First Great Western and Stagecoach Devon to devise the scheme.

“After losing my car last week I was feeling very low and called my local sight loss charity Devon in Sight to see what help was available. They understood the impact of no longer being able to drive and provided me with information and reassurance to travel by public transport.”

The Devon Access Wallet was a big help to give me the confidence to use public transport.”

Susan, a Visually Impaired Person from East Devon

‘The Devon Access Wallet was a big help to give me the confidence to use public transport.’

The wallet has been carefully designed with a fluorescent orange cover to let transport staff know that people carrying it may need help with their journey.

The Devon Access Wallet contains plastic pockets into which cards can be placed to help communication with staff.

Example cards include:

- I have a visual impairment
- Single or return fare please
- Can you please let me know when we get to my stop?
- Which platform do I catch my train from?
- Emergency Contact Details

Please note the access wallet does not give people free or discounted travel. If they are over 60 or disabled you may be entitled to free bus travel in Devon or a Senior or Disabled Persons Rail Card.

Charities are working in partnership with Devon County Council to promote the scheme.



Source: Devon County Council & Devon in Sight

For your Devon Access Wallet ring Devon in Sight on:

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Sharing your passenger stories



▲ Photo Credit: Monkey Business Images (iStock)

As part of the Driver Disability Awareness Training we encouraged feedback from Public and Community Bus Drivers about the ways that people living with a disability could help them to provide a better service.

You said:

“We understand that many people who use Public and Community Transport do not want to ‘own’ their condition. However, this should not stop passengers asking for help if they need it.”

“Where passengers struggle to find the right coinage we would encourage them to use a contactless payment card. This speeds things up and stops other passengers from getting frustrated.”

‘We would like passengers to ask for help if they need it.’

“We would encourage more people living with a hidden disability to wear a Sunflower Lanyard or to start using a Devon Access Wallet.”

“We would like more people who are blind or partially sighted to wear a ‘Partially Sighted Badge’, use a Symbol Cane or long cane to raise awareness of their condition.”

“If you have a specific stop that you want, please ask the driver to call out the stop to you when boarding the bus.”

“We would welcome passengers who need additional assistance to sit near to the front of the bus so we can offer assistance easier and more discreetly.”

“Some community bus drivers are prepared to stop closer to a passenger’s home but this may not be possible for some public bus services.”

“We would like passengers to remain seated when they have activated the ‘Stop Bell’ until the bus has come to a stop.”

If you would like to advertise any tips for passengers to make your life easier please let us know.

Source: ‘Connecting You’ Bus Driver Awareness Training 2023

Audio/Visual Aids on Buses

‘Disabled passengers across Great Britain will be able to travel more confidently thanks to new laws that will boost accessibility for everyone.’



▲ Photo Credit: Stagecoach South West

Disabled passengers across Great Britain will be able to travel more confidently thanks to new laws that will boost accessibility for everyone.

On 30 March 2023, the Department for Transport announced that it is introducing rules that will require almost every local bus or coach service to provide audible announcements and visual displays identifying the route and direction, each upcoming stop, and the beginning of any diversions.

The government is supporting industry to upgrade their vehicles, with £4.65 million in funding for the smallest bus and coach companies, and the changes will be implemented gradually, with almost all vehicles required to comply by October 2026.

At present, there is patchy provision across the country, with only 30% of buses outside London providing this information, which can be a major barrier for disabled people wanting to travel by bus or coach.

Clear audible and visible information will also benefit non-disabled people, helping those who are travelling on an unfamiliar bus route, and giving passengers confidence that they will not be left stranded at the wrong stop late at night.

Roads and Accessibility Minister Richard Holden said, “Everyone deserves to take the bus with confidence, and this is a massive boost for passenger independence. Simple and effective audible and visible information should be a baked-in feature of a modern bus service to help people reach their destination, wherever they travel in Great Britain.”

To ensure the information provides real-life benefits, the Department for Transport has worked closely with disabled passengers, user groups and the bus and coach sector, whilst giving operators the flexibility to choose solutions suitable for their services.

The Audio Visual Aids will include ensuring audio is available through induction loop systems, and all new vehicles introduced after October 2024 must also include visible information which can be seen by a wheelchair user when travelling in a rearward facing wheelchair space.

This announcement forms part of the government’s commitment to improve disabled people’s experience on our transport system and build stronger communities, including through their Inclusive Transport Strategy, which aims to create accessibility equality on the network by 2030.

Source: Department for Transport (Press Release 30 March 2023)

Order Your Training Certificate

You have now read the **Bus Driver Disability Awareness Manual**.

To evidence your commitment to ongoing professional development and training you can now register online and receive your **Certificate of Completion**.



To order your **Certificate of Completion** and **5 CPD points** follow these simple steps

1. Register through the **Devon in Sight Website**.
Click on the QR Code above or visit:
<https://devoninsight.org.uk/professionals/bus-driver-disability-awareness-training>
2. Complete the **Registration Form**.
3. Certify that you have read the manual and watched the training videos.
4. Share any feedback you have for us.
5. Click **Submit**
6. We will send you your **Certificate of Completion** including the **CPD Course Accreditation**.

All Information remains confidential and held in accordance with the **Data Protection Act 2018**.



▲ Photo Credit: Good Life Studios (iStock)

Congratulations!

Thank you for taking the time to read this manual and watch the videos.

We hope that we have been able to give you some handy hints to help you support your passengers living with a disability.

You should now be better equipped to play your part in helping remove the barriers for people with disabilities who wish to use public and community transport and ultimately help them reduce their feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

Please share this manual with your colleagues. You can order more copies of this manual by contacting the Devon in Sight Helpline or by using the QR code below.



For support please ring the Devon in Sight Helpline on:

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Devon in Sight (The Devon County Association for the Blind)

Devon in Sight offers a range of holistic services for anyone affected by sight loss across Devon. They provide support to people who are blind or partially sighted, their families, friends and carers. They also support professionals working with people with little or no sight.

Devon in Sight
Splatford Barton
Kennford
Exeter
EX36 7XY



Helpline **01392 876 666**
Website **www.devoninsight.org.uk**
Charity No. **1140978**

Dementia

Alzheimer's Society are working towards a world where dementia no longer devastates lives. They do this by giving help to those living with dementia today, and providing hope for the future.

Alzheimer's Society

3-4 Crutched Friars
London
EC3N 2AE

Helpline **0333 150 3456**
Website **www.alzheimers.org.uk**
Charity No. **296645**



Living Options Devon

Living Options Devon works across the South West to ensure that people with disabilities and Deaf people (who use British Sign Language) can live the life they choose.

Living Options Devon

Units 3-4
Cranmere Court
Lustleigh Close
Marsh Barton
Exeter
EX2 8PW

Helpline **01392 459 222**
Website **www.livingoptions.org**
Charity No. **1102489**



North Devon Voluntary Services

North Devon Voluntary Services is an independent charity based in Barnstaple, providing support and specialist advice to voluntary organisations and social enterprises in their local area.

North Devon Voluntary Services

Suite 206
Queens House
Queen St
Barnstaple
EX32 8HJ

Helpline **01271 866 300**
Website **www.ndvs.org.uk**
Charity No. **1133707**



connecting
you

Driving Change for
People with disabilities
in Devon



Devon in Sight
Your local sight loss charity



01392 876 666

enquiries@devoninsight.org.uk
www.devoninsight.org.uk

Devon in Sight
Splatford Barton, Kennford,
Exeter, EX6 7XY.



in partnership with
Devon
County Council

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