Devon in Sight Understanding Your Eye Condition Fact Sheet 35

Criteria for Registration

Introduction

Your eye specialist (a consultant ophthalmologist) will decide if you can be certified as severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted).

What happens when you see the eye specialist

The eye specialist, called a consultant ophthalmologist, will decide whether you meet the criteria for certification by measuring your:

Visual acuity – your corrected central vision, the vision you use to see detail whilst wearing your glasses or contact lenses if you need them.

Visual field – how much you can see around the edge of your vision, while looking straight ahead.

Your visual acuity is measured by reading down an eye chart while wearing any glasses or contact lenses that you may need, so remember to bring them to your appointment. Your field of vision is measured by a “visual field test”. There are guidelines about the level of sight needed to be registered severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted).

The consultant may do other tests to check your eye health. This could mean they use drops to dilate (open) your pupils, which can blur your vision for a few hours afterwards. Driving is not possible for the period so you may want to have someone with you to help you home after the appointment.

After the ophthalmologist has assessed your vision and your eyes, they will decide if you are eligible for your sight loss to be certified. The consultant can certify you as either severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted) by completing the Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) in England and Wales. In Scotland it's called BP1, in Northern Ireland it's called A655.

If your sight is affecting your ability to drive safely, you need to inform the DVLA on 0300 790 6806.

The Snellen test for visual acuity

Visual acuity is measured using the Snellen scale. A Snellen test usually consists of a number of rows of letters which get smaller as you read down the chart.

On the Snellen scale, normal visual acuity is called 6 / 6, which corresponds to the bottom or second bottom line of the chart. If you can only read the top line of the chart then this would be written as 6 / 60. This means you can see at 6 metres what someone with standard vision could see from 60 metres away.

The figures 6 / 60 or 3 / 60 are how the result of a Snellen test are written. The first number given is the distance in metres from the chart you sit when you read it. Usually this is a 6 (for 6 metres) but would be 3 if you were to sit closer to the chart (3 metres away).

The second number corresponds to the number of lines that you are able to read on the chart. The biggest letters, on the top line, correspond to 60. As you read down the chart, this number gets smaller as it correspond to the lines with smaller letters. Someone with standard vision can read towards the bottom of the chart. Standard vision can be referred to 6 / 6 vision.

For example, if the second line of the chart was marked as the 36 line, a person with standard vision (6 / 6) would be able to read this line on the chart when it was 36 metres away. However, if you had a Snellen score of 6 / 36, you would only be able to read the same line at 6 metres away. In other words you need to be much closer to the chart to be able to read it. Generally the larger the second number is, the worse your sight is.

What do the results of your vision test mean for your certification?

The ophthalmologist uses a combination of both your visual acuity and your field of vision to judge whether you are eligible to be certified, and at which level. If you have a good visual acuity, you will usually have had to have lost a large part of your visual field to be certified as severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted).

Alternatively, if you have all your visual field, you will usually have to have a very poor visual acuity to be certified as severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted).

Generally, to be certified as **severely sight impaired (blind)**, your sight has to fall into one of the following categories, while wearing any glasses or contact lenses that you may need:

- Visual acuity of less than 3 / 60 with a full visual field.
- Visual acuity between 3 / 60 and 6 / 60 with a severe reduction of field of vision, such as tunnel vision.
- Visual acuity of 6 / 60 or above but with a very reduced field of vision, especially if a lot of sight is missing in the lower part of the field.

To be certified as **sight impaired (partially sighted)** your sight has to fall into one of the following categories, while wearing any glasses or contact lenses that you may need:

- Visual acuity of 3 / 60 to 6 / 60 with a full field of vision.
- Visual acuity of up to 6 / 24 with a moderate reduction of field of vision or with a central part of vision that is cloudy or blurry.
- Visual acuity of 6 / 18 or even better if a large part of your field of vision, for example a whole half of your vision, is missing or a lot of your peripheral vision is missing.

Sight loss in one of your eyes

Your ophthalmologist will carry out these tests on both of your eyes. If you have lost the sight in one of your eyes, your ophthalmologist will not be able to certify you as sight impaired or severely sight impaired unless you have significant sight loss in your other eye. This is because your other eye will largely compensate for the loss of sight in the affected eye.

If your eye specialist does certify you

The eye specialist sends copies of the certificate to you, your GP and your local social services department. You can then choose to be registered with your local social services if you wish to.
If your eye specialist tells you that you cannot be certified

Your eye specialist might tell you that you cannot be certified at present. This could be for one of three reasons:

- You haven't met the criteria for visual acuity and field of vision.
- They feel your sight loss isn't permanent.
- If you are already receiving treatment that could improve your sight, they may wish to wait for the outcome of that treatment.

Whatever the reason, if you feel strongly that you should be certified then talk to your GP about referring you to a second specialist. Bear in mind though that this second specialist will have to follow the same rules for the certification process. Remember that you can still get help from social services even if your sight loss cannot be certified.

Changes to Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) form in England

The Department of Health have released an updated CVI form in England that simplifies the form and only collects essential information, making it easier for patients to understand and for staff to complete. In addition, there are no longer separate forms for adults and children; the updated form is now more relevant to both and provides more information to patients regarding the support that is available to them.

What to do next?

If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms or your sight loss deteriorates, please contact your GP, Optician or Accident & Emergency Department at your local Hospital.

If you need any further advice call our Helpline: 01392 876 666

Devon in Sight is a member of the **Helpline Partnership Community.**

Credit

We would like to thank the **RNIB** for their kind permission to reproduce this information.

Further Support Available from Devon in Sight

Devon in Sight offers a range of holistic services for anyone affected by sight loss, who either live in or work across Devon. We can provide support to people who are blind or partially sighted, their families, friends and carers.

Our Sight Loss Services focus on four key areas, **Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**, **Independent Living**, **Health and Wellbeing**, and **Influencing Change** (Making the world a better place for people with sight loss).

Information Disclaimer

Devon in Sight is committed to producing Information, Advice & Guidance Resources that are clear, accurate, evidence-based, up-to-date and easy to use. We have a robust information production process based on best practice to ensure that information we produce meets the needs of people who are blind or partially sighted and their family and friends.

Devon in Sight is not a medical organisation; therefore we can only provide general information that is not intended to be a substitute for a proper medical assessment. Our information is not intended to be used for individual cases. If you have a specific question about your eye condition, we recommend that you consult an eye care professional.

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Our Information, Advice & Guidance Resources were correct at the time of writing. However, due to research and medical advances, the content may not be completely up to date.

Devon in Sight Contact Information

Helpline 01392 876 666
www.devoninsight.org.uk
enquiries@devoninsight.org.uk

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