

ActionFACTS

Action for blind people 

# Did you know that

## **One in thirty of the UK's population is blind or partially sighted?**

This means that nearly two million people are visually impaired. A visual impairment can be defined as a sight condition which cannot be corrected by glasses alone.

## **An eye examination can pick up signs of diabetes, glaucoma and multiple sclerosis as well as eye conditions?**

There are no pain receptors at the back of the eyes, so your eyes cannot warn you that there is a problem.

Ideally you should visit an optician at least once a year for an eye test.

## **Being blind doesn't usually mean seeing nothing?**

Only 4% of visually impaired people see nothing at all. The other 96% have some vision, even if it is only light perception, e.g. being able to tell where a window is.

## **45% of blind and partially sighted adults live alone?**

This compares with 11% of the population as a whole. Older visually impaired people are even more likely to live alone (50% of those over 75).

## **Three out of four visually impaired people of working age are unemployed?**

Many people believe that a visual impairment stops people working. This is simply not true; blind and partially sighted people are employed in a wide range of rewarding jobs.

## **Only 6% of visually impaired people claim the benefits they're entitled to?**

There are several benefits available to claim, for example Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance.

## **60% of visually impaired children attend mainstream schools?**

Local Education Authorities have to provide support, which may include visits from a specialist teacher, or special equipment.

## **Four out of five people with sight problems are aged 65 or over?**

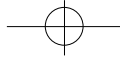
As the elderly population increases, so does the number of visually impaired people. Many older people simply accept losing their sight as a result of ageing and don't seek help, but there is support available.

## **For people over 65, the most common cause of sight loss is age related macular degeneration?**

This is caused by the macular at the back of the eye either becoming damaged or wearing out. Macular degeneration affects central vision and means that people may have trouble recognising faces or reading.

## **Diabetes is the most common cause of visual impairment for people of working age?**

Diabetic eye disease mainly affects people with insulin controlled diabetes and can result in damage to blood vessels in the retina. An additional side effect is loss of sensitivity in fingers which can make learning Braille difficult.


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# Did you know that

## **Cataracts result from a breakdown in the lens itself?**

Many people think that a cataract is a growth over the lens. In fact the lens itself becomes cloudy so that light cannot pass through properly. Bright sunlight can be very uncomfortable for someone with a cataract. A cataract operation removes the whole lens, usually replacing it with an implant. Around 90% of operations are successful.

## **Blind and partially sighted people often do not have access to information?**

Many blind and partially sighted people have problems reading their own mail or newspapers because the print is too small or too faint, so they have to rely on others to read to them. This leaflet is printed in 14pt type and is the minimum accessible print size. Providing information in alternative formats such as tape, Braille and disk is essential.

## **Only 3% of blind and partially sighted people can read Braille?**

Most people who read Braille have been blind since birth or lost their sight at an early age. Many older people may find it difficult to learn as they have less manual dexterity. For many deafblind people, however, Braille is an essential means of communication.

## **Visually impaired people play cricket, golf, archery, football and other sports?**

In Partially Sighted Football, the players all have a visual impairment, apart from the goalkeeper who can be fully sighted. The ball tends to be passed on the floor rather than in the air and this makes for an exciting, quick paced game.

Blind Football is played by people with no sight at all. The ball has ball bearings in it to make it more audible and help the players identify its position. There are also coaches on the sidelines who shout directional instructions to the players.

## **A wide range of equipment is available to help visually impaired people lead independent lives?**

These include:

- a talking microwave oven
- a safe 'hot water bottle' with granular material inside which can be warmed up in a microwave
- a machine that scans the printed word onto a computer – a voice synthesiser can then read out the text
- a hand-held CCTV scanner which magnifies print onto an ordinary TV screen
- a cordless big button telephone
- a talking video remote control



## **Action for blind people**

**Action for Blind People is a national charity transforming lives through:  
Work, Housing, Leisure and Support**

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This leaflet is also available on tape, in Braille and on disk.

