



Confident Living

R N I B

See differently

Travel



RNIB Connect Radio Freeview 730



Shop at: rnib.org.uk/shop



Donate at: rnib.org.uk/donate

The Sight Advice FAQ

The Sight Advice FAQ answers questions about living with sight loss, eye health or being newly diagnosed with a sight condition. It is produced by RNIB in partnership with many other sight loss organisations. sightadvicefaq.org.uk



Contents

- 5** About this guide
- 6** Walking
- 15** Using public transport
- 19** Buses
- 24** Coaches
- 26** Community transport
- 27** Trains
- 31** Taxis and mini cabs
- 34** London transport
- 43** Further information
- 46** RNIB Booklet Series



About this guide

In this booklet, we've put together information to help you get out and about confidently. Whether it's walking to the shops, catching a bus, train, taxi or going on holiday, there are a wide range of services available.

The services we mention in this booklet are available nationally. If you want to know what local services are available in your area, an easy way to find out is through our online listings directory called Sightline Directory, which is run by RNIB. You can access Sightline Directory at **[rnib.org.uk/sightline-directory](https://www.rnib.org.uk/sightline-directory)**

If you have a query about something that hasn't been covered in this booklet, please get in touch with us. We're ready to help, just give us a call or drop us an email.

RNIB Helpline
0303 123 9999
helpline@rnib.org.uk

Walking

There are various accessible street features that can help you to get around safely. A few examples of these include tactile paving, which can be felt underfoot or by cane, to indicate the presence of hazards, such as steps, changes in elevation, or obstacles. Corduroy paving, is a type of tactile paving that features a series of parallel lines or ridges, this is typically used to mark the edge of a platform or flight of stairs. Blister paving is a series of raised blister-like domes or truncated cones. They're typically used to mark pedestrian crossings or other areas where pedestrians and vehicles may interact.

Mobility training

Mobility training can be incredibly helpful for anyone struggling with sight loss, providing necessary skills and tools to navigate surroundings safely and independently. You're entitled to mobility training from your local social service sensory team. Training includes route planning, navigating unfamiliar environments and using electronic mobility devices and canes.

Mobility aids

There are many products and aids that can help you to travel independently, including:

- canes
- mobile GPS devices
- navigation apps
- guide dogs.

Canes

Canes are often essential tools for people with sight loss, providing greater mobility, safety and independence in navigating their environment. There are three types of canes: the symbol, guide and long cane. To learn more about which cane is best suited to you, visit your local low vision clinic, which can be found by visiting **rnib.org.uk/sightline-directory**.

Mobile GPS devices

Global Positioning System (GPS) devices and software are available to give you information about your current location and how to get to your destination. These often use a combination of maps and audible directions to help with navigation.

Victor Reader Trek is a talking book player and GPS device, combining talking book and media playback, with navigation guidance. Simply enter your destination and it will provide turn-by-turn directions to that exact point.



Another good device is the StellarTrek which provides digital orientation and mobility assistant, using GPS technology to guide you to your destination. It can locate and recognise street addresses, doors and entrances, and provides audio and voice guidance up to 40 feet of your destination.

Navigation apps

GPS Navigation comes pre-installed on most smartphones and is free to use. iPhones have "Maps" and Android phones have "Google Maps". Both provide verbal directions, displaying the route on a map, which you can scroll through, and locate points of interest along your route such as cash machines or public toilets.

"I have used Google Maps for helping me navigate from tube or bus stop locations to where I am going. I appreciate the spoken instructions, like, "Turn left in 25 yards". I've also used it in other countries like Spain and France to navigate where I was and how to get back to my hotel. But be careful, it can use considerable amounts of your chargeable data allowance."

**Paul Webster Technology for Life (TFL)
volunteer**

Blind Square

The Blind Square app, available only on Apple iOS, tells you about your surroundings, such as the road you're on and the shops on either side.

DotWalker

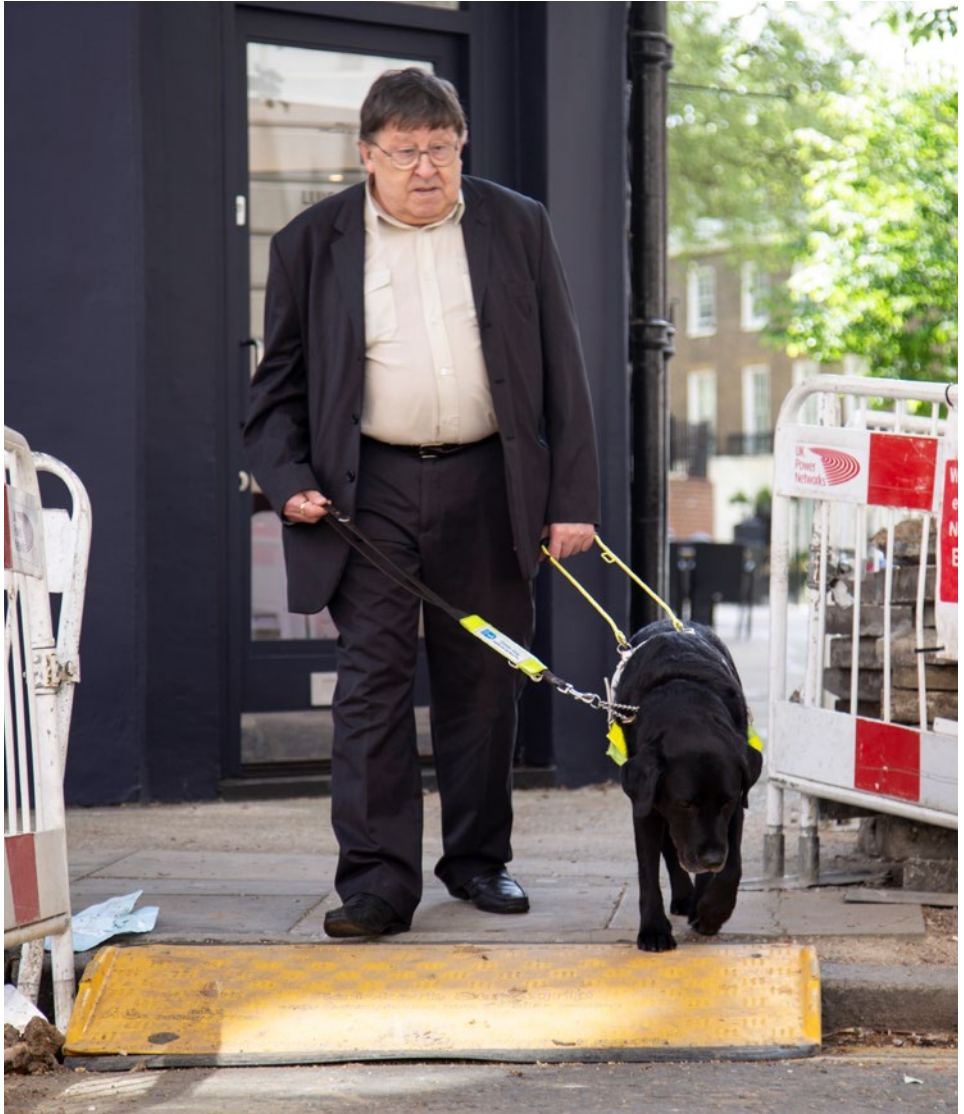
DotWalker is a free navigation app for Android providing turn-by-turn navigation to and from an address or saved point. It has a suite of features including a talking compass and an updated list of nearby points. Using its intuitive gestures you can easily find what's around you with a simple swipe in the required direction.

"DotWalker is my favourite navigation app, it uses a lot of ways to find your position which really helps it accurately locate where you are. When DotWalker announces a point, you're probably standing at the right front door!"

Kamil Midzio, TFL volunteer

There are also other popular navigation apps available for smartphones, such as Waze, and Lazarillo. All give turn-by-turn directions to help you navigate to your desired destination, and includes information about road works, shops,

cafes and other facilities to help navigate your route in real-time. There is also a wide range of useful mobility products available from RNIB and other organisations. To find out more, visit our shop at shop.rnib.org.uk or contact our Helpline.



Good to know

If you'd like to get help with using technology – from navigating with a smartphone and more call our Helpline to speak with our Technology for Life team.



Guide dogs

A guide dog can be an invaluable mobility aid, but they're not always suitable for everyone. If you think you'd like a guide dog, contact Guide Dogs to discuss your situation. Visit [guidedogs.org.uk](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk) or call **0800 781 1444**.

"When I was sixteen, I got partnered with my first guide dog, named Denaser. He really helped me navigate the years of school and college. Becoming a guide dog owner was life changing, as it enabled me to go places on my own where I hadn't been able before."

Darrell Drury

Good to know

There are a number of local schemes that offer travel assistance to blind and partially sighted people. This may include people travelling with you to the shops or travelling as part of an organised group. To find out if any schemes exist in your area, contact our Helpline or visit Sightline Directory.

Another travel assistance scheme is called My Guide, run by Guide Dogs. With My Guide, they select a trained volunteer or a friend or family member to help support you in order to achieve mobility goals. This could be improving fitness, building confidence, accessing services in your community or gaining confidence on public transport. For more information about My Guide, call **0800 781 1444**.

Using public transport

Most people with sight loss use public transport. All public transport providers have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make their services accessible.

Know your rights

There are some basic services that all travel operators should be offering you as part of their commitment to good customer service:

- Information about your journey, including timetables, ticket information and details about how to book assistance in a range of ways, such as by telephone, online and in print.
- Accessible ways to purchase your ticket, which includes ticket machines and counters that are easy to use.
- Stations and stops that are easy to find your way around, for example with a good level of lighting, clear pathways, information points that are clearly signed and that use tactile markers.
- Journey information should be announced, displayed clearly or available through a member of on-board staff.
- Information about your location and surroundings on arrival at your destination.
- Allowing guide dogs on any public transport.



To find out more about the level of service you can expect, order a copy of our free guide to getting great service by contacting our Helpline. Our Equality Act toolkit gives you advice on writing a complaint letter and taking further action. You can download the pack at [rnib.org.uk/equalityact](https://www.rnib.org.uk/equalityact) or you can order a copy by contacting our Helpline.

Good to know

You can get a Radar NKS key to unlock accessible toilets in bus and train stations, shopping centres, pubs, cafés, department stores and other public locations. Call Disability Rights UK on **0203 687 0790** to order one.



Buses

Buses offer a valuable mode of transportation for many people with sight loss, there can be various challenges associated with travelling via bus, including the lack of reliable and frequent services, varying quality of buses, and long waiting times.

Planning your journey

Planning your journey makes it easier, especially when travelling to a new destination. It may be worth researching your route before you leave and checking the timetable or using a live timetable.

How to contact your local council or bus service provider

Visit [gov.uk/find-your-local-council](https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council) for the details of your local council or visit Traveline at [traveline.info](https://www.traveline.info) to find the details of your local bus operator.

Here are a few of the things you might like to ask them:

- Is there a travel centre in my area, where I can find out about local services?
- How do I pay for my journey? Are there any concessions I'm entitled to?
- Do you provide travel support cards? You can show them to the driver as you board to alert them that you need help.
- What information is available about bus routes, timetables and the location of bus stops?
- Are there any services available to me, as someone with sight loss, which will help me use local bus services? This might include travel mentoring schemes where bus operators offer familiarisation sessions for people with disabilities, audio announcements at bus stops or on the buses themselves.

Bus information straight to your mobile

- **Arriva Bus** – is a free smartphone app which shows your nearest bus stop and information to help you plan your journey. For more information visit, arrivabus.co.uk/app
- **Stagecoach Bus** – Is a free to use app that allows you to plan, see and check when your bus will arrive. It'll give you the option to pay for your ticket before you board, save favorite journeys or bus services and includes an interactive map. It covers all areas of the UK where stagecoach is the operator. Visit stagecoachbus.com to find out more.
- **Traveline-txt** – check the next buses from a particular bus stop by sending the bus stop code in a text. The bus stop code may be displayed on the bus stop flag or in the timetable case. To use the service, simply type the stop code as a text message – and send it to **84268**.

Guide and assistance dogs

Guide dogs are allowed on all buses try to sit in the larger priority seating area where there is more space.

Concessions

The national bus concession scheme for disabled people is run by local councils and operates differently in various parts of the UK.



In England

Many local councils issue blind and partially sighted people and people who are of retirement age, with an annual bus pass which gives you free off-peak travel on local buses. Off peak is between 9.30am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday. The regulations for discounted or free bus travel vary from area to area. Contact your local council for more information and to enquire about additional benefits such as including tram travel.

In London

You may be eligible for a Freedom Pass provided by your London borough council. This offers free travel on the Transport for London network at all times.

In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Each country operates independent bus pass schemes. In Wales, contact your local council for a pass you can use on buses. A similar scheme is run by Transport Scotland and they require a National Entitlement card. In Northern Ireland you can apply to Translink for a half-fare SmartPass that can be used on bus and rail services.

Coaches

Planning your journey

There are a number of accessible coaches operated by the following companies: National Express MegaBus, Gold Line (Northern Ireland) and Citylink (Scotland).

Concessions

There isn't a national concessions scheme at present, but it's good to check with your coach operator to see if they offer discounts.

For example, National Express offers a Disabled Coachcard for people who are registered as disabled, and offers a third off your travel throughout the year.

Trams

Tram services are currently in Birmingham, Blackpool, Croydon, Dublin, Edinburgh, London (DLR), Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield and Tyne and Wear. Audible and visible announcements, which provide information about the final destination and the next stop, are available on all trams.

Concessions

Concessionary and discounted fares are available for older and disabled passengers on all services. Contact your operator or local authority for details.

Community transport

Community transport is a local door-to-door transport service which:

- Is often called 'Dial-a-Ride', 'Dial-a-Journey' or 'Ring and Ride'.
- You can book in advance.
- Can't be used for journeys for which there is alternative transport.
- Can't be used for trips you have to do every day, such as getting to work.
- Is usually run by your local council, transport authority or a local society. Some run regular shopping trips and local shop mobility schemes.

To find your local community transport service, call your local council or authority, or visit [Sightline Directory](#) to search for a local society.

Trains

Planning your journey

National Rail Enquiries can provide you with information about your train journey. Call **0345 748 4950** or visit **nationalrail.co.uk**.

National Rail also has a free app where you can plan your journey, get live status updates, alerts and notifications.

Trainline is a free app which can help you search for train times across the UK, plan journeys, purchase tickets and check for any live delays to your journey. Visit **thetrainline.com**.



The Translink NI Railways website can plan your train journeys and provide information on railway services in Northern Ireland.

Visit **translink.co.uk/services/NI-Railways**.

If you're concerned about making a journey for the first time, it might be useful for you to take part in a 'Try a Train Day' event or find out if there is a travel mentoring scheme in your area.

'Try a Train Day' events are run by train operators and usually involve being escorted on a journey so that you can familiarise yourself with the stations, trains and locations of facilities. Thameslink, C2C and South West Trains are just some of the train operators who have already run these events.

To find out about 'Try a Train Day' events in your area, contact your local train operator through National Rail Enquiries on **0345 748 4950** or visit **nationalrail.co.uk**

Booking assistance

You can book free assistance for boarding, alighting and changing trains through your train operator but this usually needs to be done 24 hours and in some cases 36 hours in advance of your journey. To find your train operator, contact National Rail enquiries on **0345 748 4950** or visit **[nationalrail.co.uk](https://www.nationalrail.co.uk)**. If you haven't been able to book your assistance in advance, you can still ask for assistance at ticket offices or turnstiles.

If you need assistance when travelling in Northern Ireland, you can call the Translink Contact Centre on **028 9066 6630** at least 24 hours before you travel.

Accessibility at train stations

Speak to your train operator or staff at the station about accessible timetables. Trains have visual or audio notifications of the next station stop. If these aren't working then speak to station staff about the number of stops to your destination.

Train platforms will have visual and tactile markings indicating where it is safe to stand, such as a yellow line or corduroy paving as this indicates safe areas on the platform.

Concessions

Concessionary fares are available for blind and partially sighted people and these often deliver discounts of up to 50 per cent on the standard ticket price. You'll need to provide evidence of your sight loss in order to get these discounts. This could include a document from your local social services department or your CVI (Certificate of Visual Impairment).

The Disabled Persons Railcard also offers a range of discounts on advance, off-peak and anytime train fares. It also offers discounts on other services, such as a third off some London Underground Travelcards. You're not required to travel with a companion but if you do and if they're an adult, they can also receive the same discounts. For more information, call **0345 605 0525** or visit **disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk**.

Taxis and mini cabs

Planning your journey and booking assistance

If you're looking for a taxi at the start or end of your journey, speak to station staff, they can assist you in hailing a taxi from directly outside the station.

Under the terms of the Equality Act 2010, licensed taxis, black cabs and private hire drivers cannot refuse to take a guide dog, although a driver can apply for an exemption if, for example, they are allergic to dogs.

Most companies will now send a text message once the driver is outside, but if you require them to knock on the door, make this known when booking. Also, let the driver know if you need guiding to and from the taxi.



Ride Sharing apps

Accessible ride sharing apps, such as Uber and Bolt, allow you to order taxis directly from your smartphone. You can use your location services or type in the location you wish to be collected from.

Concessions

London Taxicard scheme

The London Taxicard scheme provides subsidised door-to-door transport for people with disabilities. Taxicard holders can make journeys in licensed London taxis and private hire vehicles and have their trips subsidised. The amount your journey is subsidised will vary between boroughs. To learn more or to apply for a Taxicard, call **020 7934 9791** or visit **[londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/taxicards](https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/taxicards)**. Once you have your Taxicard, book your taxis by calling ComCab on **020 7763 5001**.

This scheme is also available outside of London, contact your local social services to learn more.

Travelling by car

Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge Scheme entitles disabled people, including passengers registered as blind or partially sighted, to car parking which is closer to their destination. If you travel by car with family, friends or carers, they can use your Blue Badge whilst travelling with you. To find out more, contact your local council or visit **GOV.UK**.

Driving

If your eye condition affects both eyes and can't be corrected by glasses or contact lenses, you must tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) by calling **0300 790 6806**. DVLA need to assure you meet the basic eyesight requirements for driving. If you don't inform them, you'll be breaking the law and invalidating your insurance, as well as endangering yourself and others.

More information is available from our website or by contacting our Helpline.

London transport

Planning your journey

The key to accessible tube travel is to plan ahead, Transport for London (TfL) can help you plan your journey. They produce a range of free accessible maps, including an 'Avoiding stairs' map and a 'Step free' guide in various formats. For more information, call **0343 222 1234** or email **tflaccessibility@tfl.gov.uk**.

You can download the TFL go app onto any smartphone, it provides the best routes between stations and bus stops. You can also use the journey planner website, visit **tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility**.

TfL run a free Travel Mentoring Service, providing advice on planning your journey using an accessible route and can even provide a mentor to come with you for your first few journeys. Find out more by calling **020 3054 4361** or emailing **travelmentor@tfl.gov.uk**.

Buying tickets

Although you can still buy paper tickets, it might be cheaper to use an Oyster card or by contactless payment. Single tickets, Day Travelcards, One Day Bus, and Tram Passes can be more expensive than using pay as you go on your Oyster or via a contactless device.

Oyster cards can be purchased from any ticket shop, station, or travel information centre. Add money for pay as you go journeys or add on a travelcard. If you don't already have a contactless bank card, speak to your bank to obtain one. Smartphones and smartwatches can also be used to pay for your journey. This works the same way as a contactless bank card payment which is linked to your device via your bank account. You can request a copy of our Accessible banking factsheet which includes information on using contactless payment, by contacting our Helpline.

When travelling on buses in London, you can only use Oyster, contactless payments, or paper tickets for your journey. If you're planning on visiting London, a visitor Oyster card may be useful, it's preloaded with pay as you go credit to spend on travel. The credit will never expire – it stays there until you use it. For more information visit **[visitorshop.tfl.gov.uk](https://www.visitorshop.tfl.gov.uk)**.

Booking assistance

You don't need to book assistance in advance from TfL. All staff receive disability equality training and can assist you with purchasing tickets, travel information and boarding trains. They will then call ahead to your destination or interchanging stations and arrange for staff to assist you there. Call **0343 222 1234** or book via the TFL go app.

Guide dogs

Guide dogs are welcome on all TfL services, including taxis and private hire vehicles (minicabs). Bus drivers are trained to recognise their harnesses or jackets, your guide dog is permitted to travel on either deck of the bus. Only trained guide dogs can use moving escalators, if your dog isn't trained, staff will help you avoid escalators by using lifts and stairs. If either is unavailable the escalator will be stopped so you may walk.

Accessibility at tube stations

All London Underground trains announce each stop. Announcements are also made at some stations so that you know which train is about to arrive. All trains have priority seating which is marked next to the doors. These are for disabled people, pregnant women, older people, and those travelling with children. TfL offers a free badge or card called 'Please offer me a seat' and is available to help you alert fellow passengers that you might need a seat. It's usable on all TfL services, DLR, Trams, and River Services. You won't need to explain your reasons for it to either TfL staff or other passengers. For further information call **0343 222 1234** or visit **tfl.gov.uk**.

Many 'accessible' stations have a step onto the train which may be as high as 30cm (12 inches). You can contact Transport for All on **020 7737 2339** for detailed information about the size of the gaps between the platform and the train or for the number of steps at a station.

If a lift is broken when you arrive at a step-free station, ask a member of staff to help you re-plan your journey. If there is a single accessible bus journey to the next step-free station, or your destination, then this is the route you will be advised to take. However if there is not, then

London Underground is obliged to order you a taxi at their expense. This also applies when the line is closed and the rail replacement bus service is not accessible or does not stop at an alternative accessible station.

TfL's journey planner or their Customer Service Centre can tell you if particular lifts or escalators are out of order or if stations are closed. Or you can get this information texted to your phone via TfL Travel Alerts. Register for the service at **alerts.tfl.gov.uk**

Many Underground stations have help points on the platforms. They also have buttons to press for passenger information.

Concessions

If you have sight loss and live in London, you may be entitled to a Freedom Pass which gives you free travel on bus, tram, tube, DRL, London Overground and Elizabeth line services. Contact your local council and ask for an application form. Contact the Freedom Pass telephone support line on **0300 330 1433** or visit **[londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/freedom-pass](https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/freedom-pass)**.

A Freedom Pass entitles you to free travel from 9.00am on weekdays and anytime at weekends and bank holidays, except for river services and

IFS Cloud Cable Cars where discounted fares are available. The Freedom Pass is accepted at all times on London Overground services run by TfL.



Travelling abroad

Air

When planning a holiday, it's important to ensure that assistance is booked advance to minimise disruptions, ensuring that your trip is accessible from start to finish.

Booking assistance

If you feel that you may not be able to find your own way to the plane, ask for the airline to meet and assist you. This assistance can be booked in advance at the time of booking or by contacting the airline or tour operator at least 48 hours before you're due to travel. Be clear about the type of help that you need, as this will help avoid delays.

Accessibility at airports

People with disabilities can travel with up to two items of mobility equipment free of charge, which won't be counted as part of your baggage allowance. Inform your airline, travel agent or tour operator as soon as possible if you're travelling with mobility aids.

Travelling with a Guide dog

Airlines must accept guide dogs for air travel without charge. They'll normally seat you at the front of the plane, allowing your guide dog space to sit by you. The airline may ask for confirmation that your dog has been trained to a standard that allows them to travel safely by air, and will need to comply with the rules of the Pet Travel Scheme. For more information contact Guide Dogs on **0800 781 1444**.

Airport parking

Blue Badge holders may be entitled to a discount on long stay parking. Check with the relevant airport for the rates.

Ferry

While ferry operators can assist you with your orientation of the ship, they also recommend that you travel with a fully sighted companion if you're likely to require further assistance during the journey.

If you're travelling with a registered guide dog, it's essential that you notify the ferry operator at the time of booking or at least 48 hour before you're due to travel.

Blue Badge holders can use designated parking bays for disabled people on the ferry that are close to lifts For further information visit **[discoverferries.com](https://www.discoverferries.com)**.

Further information

RNIB Helpline

If you need someone who understands sight loss, call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999**, say **"Alexa, call RNIB Helpline"** to an Alexa-enabled device, or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**. Our opening hours are weekdays from 8am – 8pm and Saturdays from 9am – 1pm. For the latest information on travelling with sight loss, visit our website **rnib.org.uk/travel-concessions**.

Sightline Directory

Find services and organisations near you that support blind or partially sighted people:
rnib.org.uk/sightline-directory

Mobility products

We supply a range of products to help people with sight loss get around more easily. To find out where you can buy products in your area or to order the latest copy of our Mobility Solutions catalogue, call our Helpline.

Transport Scotland

To find out what help and support is available in Scotland, call **0141 272 7100** or visit **transport.gov.scot**.

Transport for Wales

For information and help on traveling in Wales, call **0333 321 1202** or visit **tfw.wales**

Translink

To find the latest information about public transport services in Northern Ireland, visit **translink.co.uk**

Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

For driver licensing enquiries, call **0300 790 6801** or visit **dvla.gov.uk**

Guide Dogs

For all information relating to travelling with your guide dog, call **0800 781 1444** or visit **guidedogs.org.uk**

National Express

To book travel assistance or for advice, call **0371 781 8181** or visit **nationalexpress.com**



RNIB Booklet Series

About the Starting Out series

Essential information about living with sight loss.
Titles include:

- Benefits, Concessions and Registration
- Emotional Support
- Help from Social Services
- Making the Most of Your Sight

About the Confident Living Series

Information to build confidence and independence. Titles include:

- Reading
- Shopping
- Technology
- Travel

About the Understanding Series

More about your eye condition. Titles include:

- Age Related Macular Degeneration
- Cataracts
- Visual Hallucinations: Charles Bonnet Syndrome
- Dry Eye
- Diabetes Related Eye Conditions including Diabetic Retinopathy
- Glaucoma
- Nystagmus
- Retinal Detachment
- Inherited Retinal Dystrophies including Retinitis Pigmentosa
- Posterior Vitreous Detachment

For audio, print or braille versions of these booklets please contact our Helpline or visit **shop.rnib.org.uk**

For a list of information sources used in these titles and to provide feedback on the Starting Out and Confident Living Series, email **ckit@rnib.org.uk**. To provide feedback on the Understanding Series, email **eyehealth@rnib.org.uk**.

RNIB Helpline



Call: 0303 123 9999



Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk



**Or say, "Alexa, call RNIB Helpline"
to an Alexa enabled device.**

**Visit Sight Advice FAQ:
sightadvicefaq.org.uk**

**Produced: October 2023
Review date: October 2025**

PR12369P

ISBN 978-1-4445-0132-6

Version: 002