

Eye care and vision factsheet

Making eye tests easier

Adults with learning disabilities are 10 times more likely to have serious sight loss, but less likely to get the eye care they need. This factsheet includes ideas about how to achieve a successful eye test by introducing some reasonable adjustments. Please be aware that some of the links to further information will download directly into your download folder and you may experience a blank screen, this is perfectly normal.

Preparing for an eye test

Find out when the person's last eye test took place. **Remember that everyone with a learning disability should have an eye test at least once a year or more often if advised.** If you are diabetic, if you have glaucoma or it is in your immediate family, you need to have an eye test at least every year. If there are changes in vision or in behaviour that may be due to vision, or if there is any eye discomfort or other symptoms, don't wait, book a test right away.



Search SeeAbility's online database of optometrists to find the right service for the person. You can [find the database here](#).



Contact the practice and explain the sight test is for a person with learning disabilities. Let them know what kind of reasonable adjustments they may need to arrange.

There are some regions in England that have commissioned a specialist learning disability pathway for eye tests. You can find out more information on the [pathway here](#).



Find out about the physical access to the practice. For example, you can ask if they are wheelchair accessible, if the consulting room can accommodate larger wheelchairs and if they have parking for Blue Badge holders nearby.

Give the practice information about the person before the eye test, you can use SeeAbility's "About me and my Eyes" form. [You can find the form here](#).

There are activities you can try at home to familiarise the person with some of the procedures involved in the eye test. You can practise these every day. These include:



Using a penlight torch, ask the person to follow the light across their field of vision left to right and up and down.



Ask the person to cover one eye with their hand. You can join in too, and try to make it fun. Then repeat this with the other eye.



One part of the sight test is to check a person's detailed vision and most optometrists do this by asking the person to identify letters on a chart.



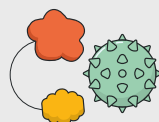
Makaton

People with learning disabilities can find identifying letters on a chart difficult and there are alternative tests. Kay Pictures can be used verbally, by Makaton signing (see www.makaton.org) or by matching the picture.



Say & Match

There is a free 'Say & Match' app which is designed as a game to practise naming and matching pictures. Find the [Say & Match app here](#).



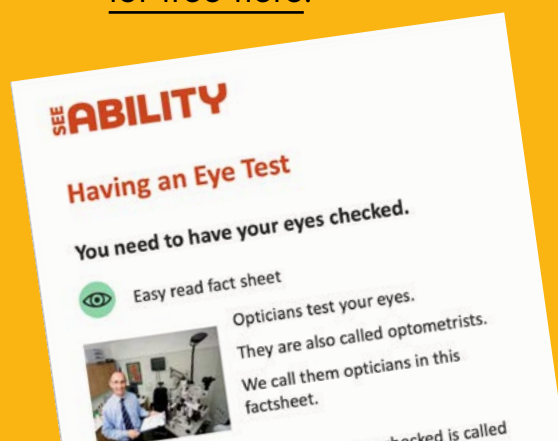
The Bradford Visual Function Box uses different sizes of beads and balls to help measure how well a person can see. Contact us for more information.

Arrange some 'practice' visits with the staff at the opticians, to help the person become familiar with the environment. Meet the staff, look at the consulting room – perhaps try sitting in the examination chair.

Some people find it too difficult to have an eye test in an optometry practice. It might be easier for the person to have an eye test at home, this is called a domiciliary eye test. You are eligible for this service if you are unable to attend an optical practice in the community on your own. Search our optometrist database to find a service in your area. [You can find the database here](#).



Some people may be very anxious about having an eye test. We have created an easy read factsheet to help understand what happens in an eye test. "Having an Eye Test" is a clear, easy to understand resource. You can [download the factsheet for free here](#).



What are reasonable adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments aim to remove barriers that people with disabilities face by making changes to enable a successful outcome. These can, and should be applied during an eye test.

You can:

- ✓ Ask for a quiet waiting area
- ✓ Ask for an appointment when the practice is usually quiet
- ✓ Ask for the first or last appointment
- ✓ Ask for an extended appointment or double appointment to allow more time
- ✓ Ask for multiple appointments. If the person you support cannot cope with all the tests in one visit, it may be better to break the appointment down into separate visits.



Provide the optometrist with as much information as possible about the person you support before the eye test – this can work best if they have completed a 'About me and my eyes' form which you can find here.

- ✓ Ask to use alternative tests, such as Kay Pictures instead of letters.
- ✓ Ask the optometrist if they will need to use eye drops. Consider if the drops could be given at home before the appointment or if the optometrist can give an anaesthetic drop first. Read our factsheet on "How to use eye drops", you can find this here.

- ✓ Ask the optometrist to tell or show the person what they are going to do before they do it, for example, warn them before they turn out the lights, touch their face or shine a light in their eyes.



Some people struggle with wearing the test frames. You can talk to the optometrist about using an alternative.

- ✎ Bring familiar or favourite items, as this may provide reassurance and give the optometrist an opportunity to observe their vision with it.
- ✓ Ask the optometrist to fill in an easy read report to give more information. We have a resource called "Results of my eye test", which you can find here.
- ✎ If glasses are needed, ask for them to be fitted by a dispensing optician to make sure the person gets the perfect fit.



People with learning disabilities can sometimes find it hard to adapt to new or different glasses. Ask for a follow up appointment with the dispensing optician to check, a few weeks after new or different glasses are fitted.

On eye test day

- 1** Arrive in good time for the appointment.
- 2** Ask for reasonable adjustments to be put in place. It is helpful if this can be agreed in advance.
- 3** Make sure the person is supported by a carer that knows them well, and are equipped to answer questions from the optometrist. Remember to take your completed "About me and my eyes" form to the appointment.
- 4** Remember to take the person's hospital passport to the appointment as this will contain information that could be useful to the optometrist.
- 5** Take all the person's glasses to the appointment to show the optometrist, even if they aren't used or liked. Find out more [information on glasses here](#).
- 6** Take evidence of benefits to claim a free NHS eye test.
- 7** Take a copy of SeeAbility's "[Results of my eye test](#)" (download here) and ask the optometrist to fill out after the appointment.
- 8** If the eye test is not going well, it might be best to stop and re-book for another day.



Remember...

No-one is too disabled to have an eye test and there are a variety of strategies you can put in place to support a person with learning disabilities to have a successful, positive experience.

SeeAbility are here to help. If you have any further questions on eye care for people with learning disabilities and autism, please feel free to contact us at eyecare@seeability.org

Don't forget to find us on social media!

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