

**SEE  
ABILITY**

# Diabetic Eye Care for People with Learning Disabilities



**Aylee Richmond – Senior Eye Care Adviser**

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# About SeeAbility

**We don't underestimate people.**

SeeAbility provides extraordinary support and champions better eye care for people with learning disabilities and autism, many of whom have sight loss.

The people we support overcome huge barriers to achieve exciting new things every day: some big, some small, all extraordinary.

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# We Champion Better Eye Care

We're tackling eye health inequalities in several important ways, by:

- Improving the lives of over 1,000 children in special schools with specialist sight tests and support with glasses.
- Changing the way the eye care system works through our research and campaigns.
- Providing expert information and advice through free downloadable resources, awareness raising and peer to peer education programmes.

Help us achieve an equal right to sight for the next generation. Get involved at [SeeAbility.org](http://SeeAbility.org).

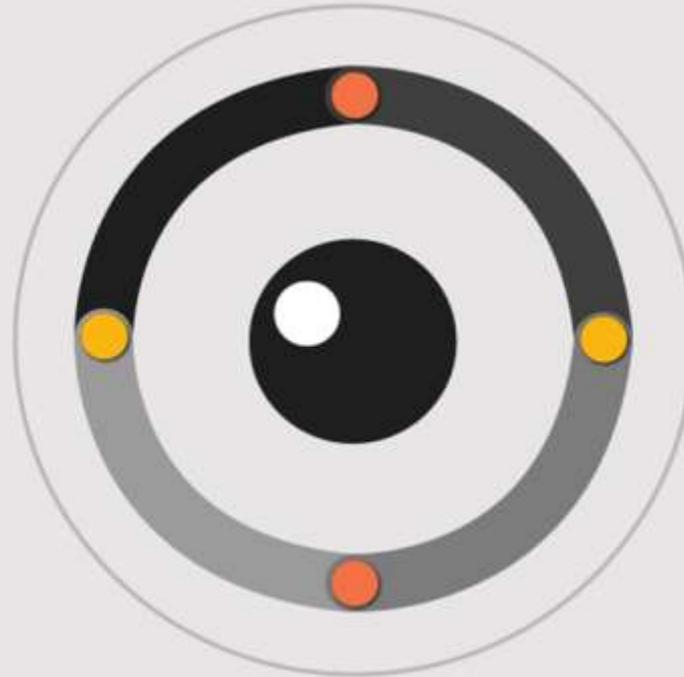
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## SIX in TEN

Adults will need glasses  
- the level of prescription is  
often much higher.

## ONE in TEN

Adults will have a serious  
sight problem.



## 28 TIMES

Children are 28 times more likely  
to have a serious sight problem.

## The increase

Severity of sight loss  
increases with severity  
of learning disability.

# Why is Vision Important?

- We all use our eyes for everything we do
- Some people rely on their vision more than others
- Changes in vision results in changes in behaviour
- Problems with vision can easily be overlooked or attributed to a person's learning disability or autism
- Everyone should be thinking about eyes and vision
- People with learning disabilities must have regular eye tests



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Nathaniel is deaf, has limited verbal communication and was in a challenging behaviour class in his special school when we gave him his first eye test 5 years ago

No one knew his vision was so poor that he could only see a few centimetres in front of his face with a prescription for glasses of -18. He now loves his glasses!



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Nathaniel is now a happy young man attending college, has learnt sign language and to ride a bike

Without his glasses his life could have taken a very different path

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Sally lost her sight  
because she didn't  
get the right eye  
care before  
**it was too late.**

# The eye care **journey** for people with learning disabilities

## Be aware of vision

- People are aware that people with learning disabilities are more likely than others to have sight problems
- Supporters recognise signs and symptoms of sight problems and take action

## Wear the right glasses

- 6 in 10 people with learning disabilities need glasses and typically need help to get used to wearing them
- Wear the right glasses or contact lenses for the right task
- Wear glasses that fit well and are clean
- Glasses and contact lenses are well maintained

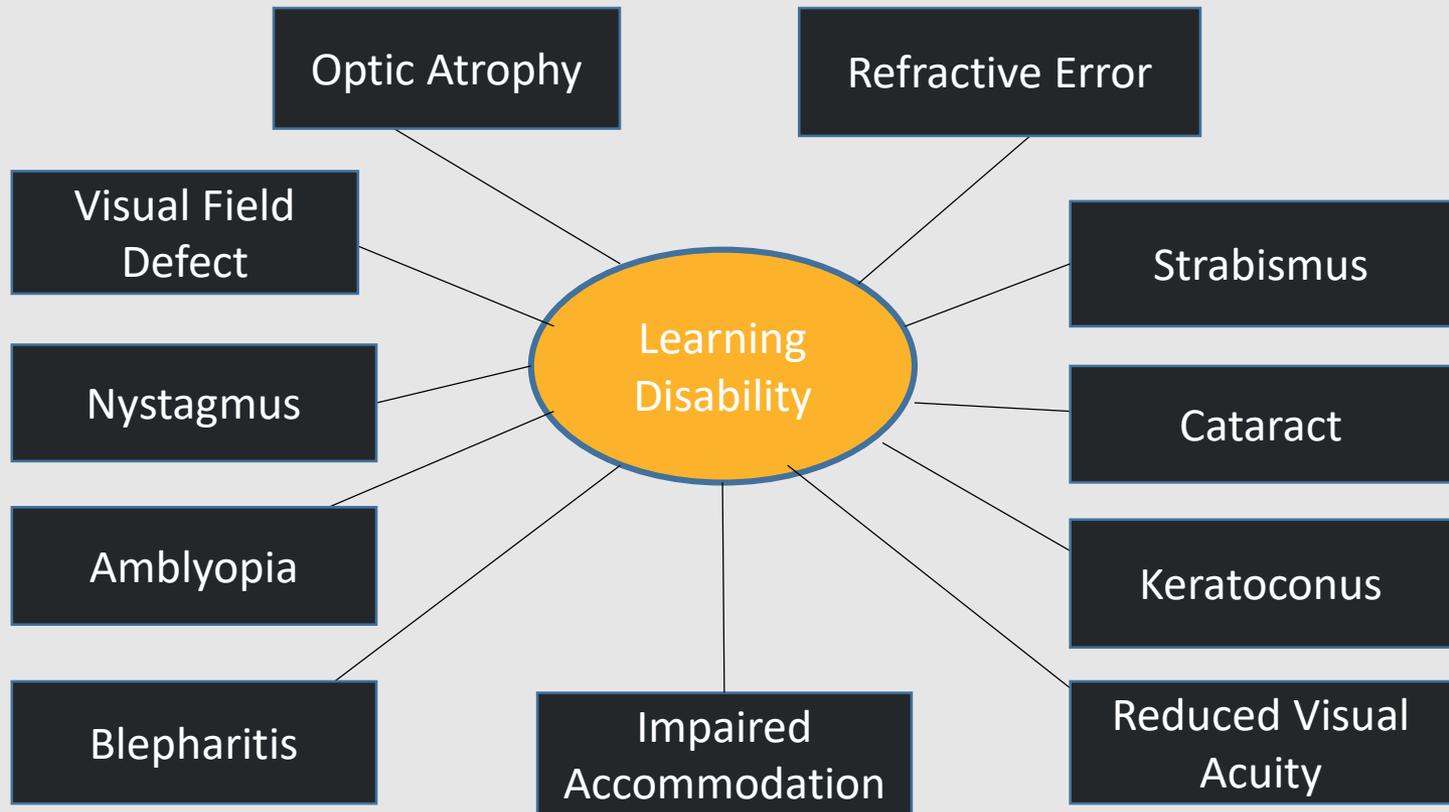
## Regular sight tests

- No-one is too disabled to have a sight test
- People are supported to prepare and take part in their sight test
- Optometrists are delivering effective sight tests/eye care for people with learning disabilities
- Results of the sight test are recorded and shared with teachers and supporters

## Get the right support

- People who have eye conditions have these identified and explained and have support to make the best use of their vision
- People who need eye surgery are supported to access surgery and aftercare
- People who have sight loss can access everyday information, specialist equipment and support in environments suitable for someone with a visual impairment

# Eye Conditions linked with learning disability – such as Downs Syndrome or Cerebral Palsy



# Learning Disability and Diabetic Eye Screening

- Adults with learning disability are thought to account for a significant proportion of the diabetic population in the United Kingdom.
  - There are many barriers to diabetic retinopathy screening for a patient with learning disability and this needs to be improved
  - The importance of developing strategies to improve health inequalities has been raised nationally and internationally
  - Specific measures should be employed as reasonable adjustments to facilitate equality of access to diabetic eye screening services across the UK
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## Learning Disability and Diabetic Eye Screening

- Adults with learning disability are thought to account for a significant proportion of the diabetic population
- This may be because of the association of diabetes with certain conditions such as Down's syndrome , or the higher rates of obesity in people with learning disability being a risk factor for Type 2 Diabetes
- Recent data extracted from GP information systems in England also indicate higher rates of Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes and lower rates of retinal screening among people with learning disabilities who have diabetes.

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## Diabetic Eye Screening - Barriers

- People don't understand why screening is so important.
- Failing to attend appointments
- Being labelled as "unsuitable" by the general practitioner
- Attempts to obtain photographs were not successful
- Patients not understanding that they need a sight test AND diabetic eye screening. People can often think that they are the same thing
- Carers may make assumptions that someone who is unable to communicate or has difficulty reading may be unable to undergo a vision test and disregard the screening invitation.

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## Diabetic Eye Screening - Barriers

- Sometimes people find medical appointments difficult.
- Poor advocacy.
- Poor testing methods and lack of time.
- Communication difficulties during the eye test.
- Difficulties understanding and sharing the results
- Diabetic Retinopathy may be asymptomatic, or changes in vision may be difficult for a person with learning disability to report.

# Diabetic Eye Screening – Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act of 2010 requires organisations to make “reasonable adjustments” in order for those with disabilities of any kind to access services. There are a number of reasonable adjustments that can help people with learning disabilities

These include:

- **Highlighting the disability** - the patient’s disability needs to be known to those offering a service.
- **Promoting access** - Avoid excluding patients from the service solely on the basis of their learning disability without exploring what adjustments might be made to allow the patient to undergo screening.

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# Diabetic Eye Screening – Reasonable Adjustments

- **Liaison with Community Health Facilitation Team** - in the event of non attendance to promote future successful screening episodes.
- **Information** - Easy Read information included with appointment letter for carer and patient so they can prepare for the examination and know what to expect
- **Desensitisation** - Arranging a pre-appointment visit to screening clinic to familiarise the patient with the new environment and equipment
- **Additional time** – Offering a double appointment to patients with a learning disability can enhance the likelihood of a successful screen and allow the patient and the screener additional time to make adjustments

## Diabetic Eye Screening – Reasonable Adjustments

- If a patient needs dilating eye drops, an anaesthetic eye drop may help any discomfort and successful screening
- Think about providing an easy read report after the screening. We have forms and resources on our website or consider creating your own resources



# SEE D B I L I T Y

## Visual Acuity Tests – Reasonable Adjustments

### Kay Pictures

- Say, sign or match the pictures.  
Provides an accurate, reliable,  
crowded acuity test which is suitable  
for people with learning disabilities



### Cardiff Cards

- The Cardiff Acuity Test, designed by  
Dr J Margaret Woodhouse, is a  
selection of preferential looking  
pictures designed to measure acuity



### Sheridan Gardiner

- The Sheridan Gardiner Test  
Complete contains near vision,  
distance and reduced Snellen tests  
which are all based on shape-  
matching



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# SEE D B I L I T Y

## What can you do?

- Make contact with local Health Facilitation Team
  - Would they like to observe screening?
  - What adjustments would they recommend?
  - Agree a "DNA" policy
- Liaise with GP to ensure they are referring patients with LD
- Review record systems to see if learning disability/cognitive impairment is recorded. Many NHS providers still lack robust flagging systems, which would identify people with complex needs
- Develop a patient journey photo story

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# What can you do?

- Ask to see the patient's hospital passport
- Obtain Kay Picture vision cards
- Consider offering double appointments for patients with learning disability
- Consider adapting patient information leaflets, offering desensitisation
- Discuss with Hospital service criteria and communication for referrals
- Consider developing a dedicated learning disability pathway

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# Ideas for Easy Read Resources

### Diabetes Eye Test



Barry goes for his eye test



Looking to see the letters



After the test your eyesight will be foggy for a while



Wearing Sunglasses for a while after my test stops my eyes watering

You will have this test done once a year

Taking my glasses off



Going into the room for the test



Having eye drops put in



Put your chin on the bar



Your eyes may water



Keep your head still for the photo it will flash



# Ideas for Easy Read Resources



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## SeeAbility Resources

We have created a number of easy read resources that can help. These include:

- An Easy Read factsheet on Diabetes and the Eyes
- An Easy Read factsheet on Diabetic Eye Screening
- Easy read factsheets on eye conditions and using eye drops

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**Diabetes and your eyes**

People with Diabetes may have problems

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Easy read factsheet

There is a special eye test for people with diabetes

This is often called the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Test

It is important your eyes are tested every year to check for problems

2019 2020 2021

We have a factsheet about the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Test

Go to [www.seeability.org/looking-after-your-eyes](http://www.seeability.org/looking-after-your-eyes) to see this and other easy read factsheets we have designed

**Diabetic Eye Screening**

What happens at a diabetic eye screening appointment

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Easy read factsheet

Having your eyes tested is the only way to find out if diabetes is damaging your sight. This special eye test is often called the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Test

It is important your eyes are tested every year to check for problems

2019 2020 2021

This is a special test about diabetes. You will still need to see the optician for an eye test every 2 years.

**Eye Drops**

How to use eye drops

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Easy read factsheet

Eye drops are medicines that go into the front of your eye and in your eyelids

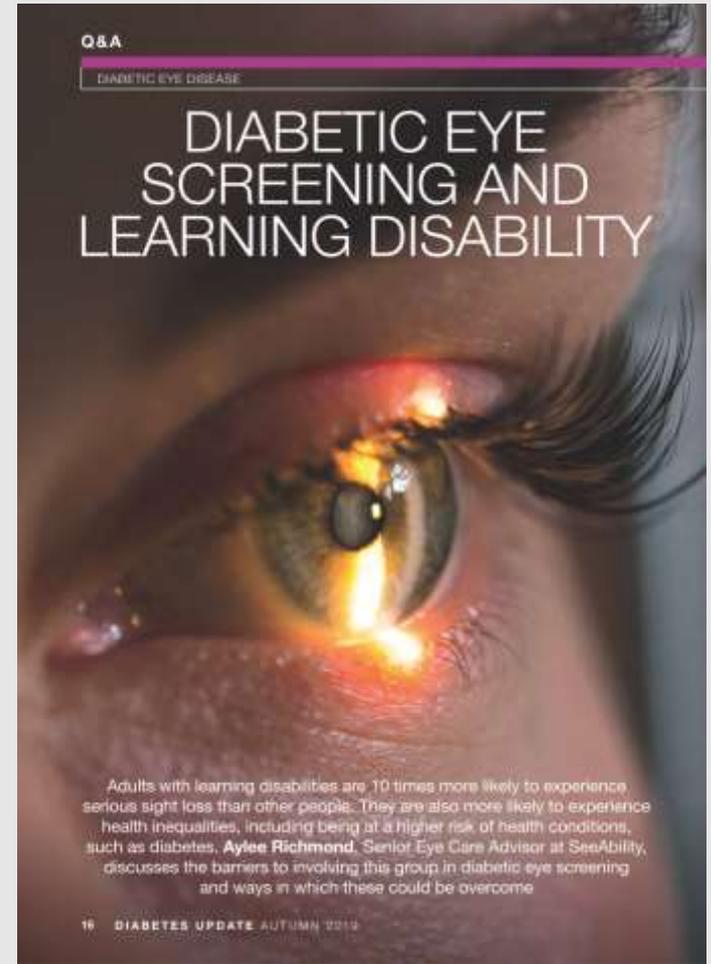
If you have problems with your eyes your doctor or eye doctor might ask you to use eye drops

It is very important to use your eye drops. Your doctor or eye doctor will tell you when you need to use them

This factsheet explains how to use eye drops

## Diabetes UK Update Magazine

- SeeAbility were recently given the opportunity to write an article for Diabetes UK Update Magazine.
- We explore the the needs of people with learning disabilities and diabetic eye screening
- Read the article for a more in depth view of the issues.



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Any Questions?



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