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Visual Impairment and Autism Guidance Material - About the project

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Introduction to the Resource Pack

The purpose of the visual impairment and autism project was to identify and share practice that supports the education of children who have visual impairment and autism.

Staff working with these children have indicated that they would like guidance on the strategies that can be used. There are few courses and publications which specifically address the needs of this group. Individual practitioners are often left to develop their own practice, relying on intuition and anecdotal reports.

The combination of visual impairment and autism has an extremely low incidence but has a very high impact. Many of the approaches that are used with sighted children who have autism, rely heavily on vision. Such methods are not necessarily suitable for children who have little or no sight. Conversely, some of the approaches used for children who have visual impairment may not be suitable for those who also have autism.

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Description of the project

The need for this resource pack became apparent when RNIB received requests for advice about meeting the needs of children who had visual impairment and autism. At the time, there was insufficient knowledge to give the advice. It was clear that there was an urgent need to obtain information about the strategies that can be used to support these children.

Staff from settings having a child with visual impairment and autism were invited to contact the project. Members of the project group visited the identified establishments in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. They investigated the strategies used to bring about educational progress with the children. Settings included both mainstream and special schools and a college of further education. Permission was obtained from parents and professionals. All information was collected and collated anonymously. Neither schools nor children are identified by name at any point. Pseudonyms only are used.

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Support for families

Although the project focused on the strategies employed by practitioners in educational settings, we fully recognise the vital role played by families and hope that these strategies will also be of value to them in the home setting.

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Acknowledgements

Our special thanks go to all the children involved in the project and to their parents. Our grateful thanks go to the settings and to the practitioners who gave so freely of their valuable time.

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The project partners

RNIB

The UK's leading charity offering information, support and advice to over two million people with sight loss: rnib.org.uk



Brookfields Specialist SEN School

A West Berkshire day school for pupils with complex needs including autism and sensory impairment: brookfieldsschool.org



The National Autistic Society



The UK's leading
charity for people
affected by autism:
autism.org.uk

The National
Autistic Society

Sunfield
A UK charity, provides
residential care,
education and
outreach support for
children with severe
and complex learning
needs, many of whom
have autism:
sunfield.org.uk



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The project team

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