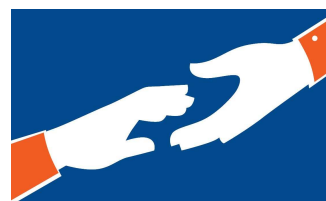


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Visual Impairment and Autism Guidance Material - Welcome

**Children who have visual impairment and autism:
identifying and sharing practice**



Resource pack - Welcome

**Visual Impairment and Autism
Project:
September 2008-March 2011**

**A partnership between RNIB, Brookfields School, The National
Autistic Society and Sunfield**



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Welcome

Welcome to the Guidance Material for practitioners working with young people who have visual impairment and autism.

The young people for whom this material was developed

The material was developed for the following two broad groups of young people:

- those who have visual impairment and a diagnosis of an autism spectrum condition, including Asperger's syndrome
- those who have visual impairment but no diagnosis of an autism spectrum condition, although their profile of skills and needs suggests that they may be on the autistic spectrum.

In both these groups, many of the young people have a complex range of disabilities. For example, in addition to their visual impairment and autism (whether diagnosed or not), these may include:

- learning difficulties – which can vary from mild, through moderate and severe to profound
- physical disability – for example, cerebral palsy, which is frequently associated with visual impairment
- hearing impairment
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- dyspraxia
- dyslexia
- epilepsy
- other chronic medical conditions.

The material may also have some relevance for another group of young people: autistic individuals with approximately age-appropriate skills who lose their sight during later childhood or adolescence. However, these young people are likely to have additional needs which are not addressed in this material, such as

- coming to terms with losing their sight
- difficulties concerning having their eyes examined and their vision tested.

It is not clear whether the material is relevant to autistic young people who have lost their sight as a result of self-harm.

Adults with visual impairment and autism

When young people with visual impairment and autism become adults, their needs clearly continue. Although the guidance material was developed for young people, it is also likely to be relevant to adults with visual impairment and autism. Indeed, a Consultant in Learning Disability provided copies of the original CD-ROM version of the material for families of adults with visual impairment and autism; he reported that the families had found the guidance helpful.

The practitioners for whom this guidance material is relevant

This guidance material is designed to support practitioners who are working with young people who have visual impairment and autism. It will assist teachers, teaching assistants, psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, music therapists, mobility / habilitation officers and others. In residential schools and colleges it will also be of value to care staff.

Families of young people with visual impairment and autism

The project focused on the strategies employed in educational settings to promote the development of young people with visual impairment and autism. However, it is recognised that parents and other family members play an essential part in promoting the development of these individuals. Although the guidance was designed for practitioners, it is also likely to be of value to families.

The development of this guidance material

The material provided here was initially developed by the team who worked on the [Visual Impairment and Autism Project](#).

Guide to using the material

If you are new to this guidance material, you may find the following helpful: you may wish to

- look first at the [case studies summaries](#) to identify a young person who has similar characteristics to an individual with whom you are working; having identified an appropriate young person, you can go to that individual's case study and then use the links from the case study to the strategies you are interested in
- go straight to the section concerned with [strategies](#). There you can choose a specific focus that might be of particular relevance to a young person with whom you are working and refer to strategies that may be of value. You could then use the links in those strategies to go to the case studies of the young people with whom this strategy is used.

The case studies and strategy descriptions have links to items in the [glossary](#) and to the [resources](#).

Please note: throughout this material, "young person" is used to include all children and young people of school age.

Acknowledgements

The members of the project team offer their special thanks go to

- the young people involved in the project
- the young people's parents who so willingly gave their consent for their sons and daughters to be involved
- the educational settings
- the practitioners who gave so freely of their valuable time.

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