

Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI): Appendix

Defining specialist skills development and best practice support to promote equity, inclusion and personal agency.



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Contents

- 3** Development of the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI)
- 4** Resource Hub
- 5** Terminology used in the UK educational context
 - 5** England: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
 - 5** Northern Ireland: SEN definition
 - 6** Scotland: Additional Support Needs (ASN)
 - 6** Wales: Additional Learning Needs (ALN) definition
- 7** Glossary of commonly used terms in the framework
- 10** References

Development of the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI)

The framework was developed through extensive consultation within the sector as part of a two-year research project, with the aim of creating a new single unifying framework to underpin the specialist education of children and young people with vision impairment.

The “access to learning / learning to access” model provides the conceptual basis (e.g. McLinden et al, 2016; Keil and Cobb, 2019; RNIB et al, 2021). The framework should reflect the common needs of children and young people with vision impairment while acknowledging individuals will have particular support needs and their own different uses of the framework. It is designed for all stakeholders in the field of vision impairment education in the UK and offers guidance for service providers (specialist and non-specialist educators), to parent and carers, and to young people.

To develop the curriculum framework and ensure it was informed by these key stakeholders, the project was divided into two key strands:

Strand 1 – VICTAR led a UK wide consultation of stakeholders to agree the new curriculum framework.

Strand 2 – VIEW, in collaboration with RNIB, led the identification and cataloguing of key resources to support the proposed curriculum framework. This included the collation of resources

that have already been developed by vision impairment education services and schools throughout the UK on an accessible platform through which the sector can share resources.

For Strand 1, the project drew on a research approach called the Delphi method. The objective of the Delphi method is to survey a group of representative experts multiple times; each time refining the outcomes of the consultation until the point at which a common consensus is formed. This method has been drawn upon extensively in research for many years, including in the field of vision impairment education, and is particularly suitable for this type of research project.

As part of the Delphi method, 50 participants took part in three periods of data collection spread over nine months. The research team worked with the project reference group to identify the types of roles and expertise which should be reflected within the expert panel to ensure that it was representative of the vision impairment education field. This included young people with vision impairment and parents, and also members of the workforce that provides specialist educational and developmental support to children and young people with vision impairment. Panel members inevitably drew upon their experience from their own settings but each was

explicitly asked to apply their expertise to the sector more broadly.

Participation for panel members involved taking part in an online focus group and completing two online surveys. This design is in keeping with the principles of the Delphi method, with the objective of the repeated design being that the panel members move closer to a consensus about what should constitute a nationally agreed curriculum framework.

The first data collection was conducted through focus groups which were facilitated by members of the project team. Each focus group meeting was run online via Zoom; each was recorded and transcribed to enable further analysis. Panel members were asked to consider a series of questions that helped the project team to:

- find out about areas of the specialist curriculum currently being offered in the UK;
- outline a rationale for providing a specialist curriculum for learners with vision impairment;
- establish what the boundaries might be for areas to be included within a new UK specialist curriculum framework;
- explore national and cultural differences that need to be taken into account in developing a framework for the whole UK;
- examine how a framework might be constructed to reflect a learner's age and individual needs.

The data collected through the focus groups informed an initial outline

of the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment. The subsequent two data collection stages were conducted through online surveys hosted on Qualtrics. These surveys focused on reviewing draft outlines of the framework, each time having the opportunity to express their level of satisfaction of the material which had been developed, and to suggest revisions. Of the 43 panel members who participated in Round 3 of the Delphi consultation, 98 per cent agreed that their views had been captured and 93 per cent were satisfied with the revised framework. Those who were less satisfied provided further feedback which was then responded to when finalising the framework.

Resource Hub

Accompanying the framework is a dedicated resource hub aimed at encouraging and supporting colleagues working with children and young people with vision impairment to share strategies and resources they have developed. The resource hub is a free accessible online repository, hosted by RNIB Bookshare. The resource hub can be used as a place to upload resources to share and a first point of reference for locating resources and information relevant to teaching the specialist curriculum skills. The aim is to encourage a knowledge sharing culture which will save time, improve efficiency and provide a level of consistency in what is being taught across the UK. Over time, development work within the broad

framework areas can be used to further populate the framework and resource hub to create a repository of information for the sector. Colleagues will be able to draw on others' resources used to "populate" areas of the framework for their own service / setting. This will offer greater freedom of choice as to how to deliver the areas across the UK.

Terminology used in the UK educational context

All four national governments of the UK recognise that learners with disabilities and / or other needs may require support that is "additional" to that provided to other learners. The system for provision, the terminology used and how particular groups are defined, is different for each nation.

England: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England. This includes learners with vision impairment, whose support entitlement is part of that for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The statutory guidance is set out in the SEND Code of Practice (COP) (DfE, 2015). According to the COP, a child or young person has special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for

them. They are defined as having a learning difficulty or disability if s / he:

"Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age"; or

"Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions" (DfE, 2015, pp15 / 16).

Northern Ireland: SEN definition

In Northern Ireland, education comes under the Department of Education, which is part of the Northern Ireland Executive. The legal framework is provided by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, also known as the SEND Act and new SEN Regulations and SEN Code of Practice are being developed. A child is defined as having special educational needs if:

"...he has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him; and a child has a "learning difficulty" if he has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age, or

he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of his age in ordinary schools..." (DENI, 2019)

Scotland: Additional Support Needs (ASN)

In Scotland, education is overseen by the Scottish Government. Learners with vision impairment are included as a discrete group, 'visual impairment', within the category of Additional Support Needs (ASN). The statutory guidance on support for learners with ASN are set out in the 2017 Additional Support for Learning Code of Practice (Scottish Government, 2017).

Wales: Additional Learning Needs (ALN) definition

The Welsh Government oversees education and skills policy and provision in Wales. Learners with vision impairment come under the category of 'additional learning needs' (ALN). The legislative framework is provided by the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, and an ALN Code will provide the statutory guidance and mandatory requirements for implementing the Act (Welsh Government, 2020). The legislative framework is part of a wider ALN Transformation Programme of reforms.



Glossary of commonly used terms in the framework

Agency

In their review, Douglas et al. (2019) identify the two key principles of vision impairment education as: equal access to education, and development of individual agency. Agency is concerned with ensuring young people have opportunities to develop their self-determination and independence in the broadest sense – in young and developmentally young people this might be concerned with making choices and expressing intention. Agency is concerned with maximising children and young people's ability to develop as independent learners within the school environment, but also part of a broader agenda about preparation for adult life, independent living and employment.

Children and young people

The primary focus of this framework is children and young people aged 0-25 years. This age band reflects educational provision and statutory guidance for supporting children with disabilities throughout the UK and has been expanded into early adulthood. The term 'learner' is used interchangeably with 'child' and / or 'young person'. While the framework covers the 0-25 age range, local authorities and countries may differ in the age banding that is supported by different services.

Complex needs

There is no agreement in the literature about how to describe children and young people who have severe vision impairment in combination with additional support needs. While no single definition can satisfactorily capture the range of conditions that include or occur with vision impairment, reference is made to 'vision impairment and complex needs' as a broad term. This term refers to learners who, in combination with a vision impairment (ocular or cerebral), have one or more disability which might be physical, intellectual, emotional, behavioural and / or sensory in nature and which can, in combination with reduced vision, significantly influence their opportunities for learning. In terms of educational attainment, learners with complex needs may have been assessed as functioning within early developmental levels throughout their education pathway. Further, a defining feature of the educational experiences of these learners will include a significant dependency on others to structure their learning experiences, their interactions with people and objects and the variety and quality of sensory experiences they encounter.

Equity

Equity relates to fairness. It recognises that some people are more disadvantaged than others in being able to access services and facilities, and that there is a responsibility to address this. Equity differs to equality: while both promote fairness, equality treats everyone the same regardless of need, while equity achieves this through treating people according to

their requirements. Ultimately, equality is the end goal (everyone enjoying equal rights), while equity is the process to get there (fair treatment and redistribution of resources) (Sightsavers, 2021).

Habilitation

Habilitation for independence is the process of maximising independence in children and young people with vision impairment. This includes supporting the functional performance of motor, cognitive, and psychological developmental milestones in everyday life (Hayton and Dimitriou, 2019). Specialist professionals in 'habilitation' aim to bring together and promote positive outcomes in orientation and independence skills in children with visual impairment. Mobility is the ability to physically move and navigate around any given environment (Miller et al., 2011). Orientation skills emerge from mobility skills and knowing your position in space. Independence skills complete the triad of the habilitation for independence approach as they also depend on mobility and orientation. Independent living skills associated with daily living in domestic and social contexts are expressed through adaptive behaviours (Greenaway et al., 2017; Bathelt et al., 2019).

Parents

The term 'parents' is used in a broad sense in the framework to refer to anyone who is the child and young person's parent, has parental responsibility or cares for the child or young person. This could include members of the extended family, for example, grandparents.

Specialist practitioners

Specialist practitioners refers to those professionals with training and expertise in vision impairment education / habilitation who have oversight of the development of the learner, with the objective of ensuring that they are provided with the necessary opportunities to become as independent as possible. Within the UK such specialist support will normally include input from a qualified teacher of children and young people with vision impairment (QTVI) and / or a registered qualified habilitation specialist (RQHS) or in the case of young adults, a rehabilitation officer with expertise in vision impairment.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is a sovereign state made up of four nations: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. An overview of the terminology and education provision used in the different nations of the UK for children and young people with disabilities / additional support needs is presented on page 5.

Vision impairment

'Vision impairment' is used as a generic term in this framework to cover all learners who are blind or partially sighted, including those whose vision difficulties are located in the brain, the vision pathways as well as in the eye. It therefore includes children and young people who have cerebral vision impairment (CVI).

In recognition of the implications of having reduced vision and how these

will be experienced differently by individual learners depending upon a range of factors, we have opted for a functional definition of vision impairment based upon one that was originally attributed to Natalie Barraga, and is cited in Flanagan et al. (2003, p497). In the UK, this definition has been recommended to clinicians as a means of ensuring appropriate and timely clinical and educational referrals for children and young people with vision impairment (Keil, Fielder and Sargent, 2016); and to service planners to ensure young learners have access to appropriate services (Flanagan et al, 2003). An adapted and expanded version is also used within the vision impairment sector to provide information about vision impairment in the context of specialist education (NatSIP, 2020). Key to this definition is the impact that a vision impairment has on a child's learning and development, and whether some form of intervention is needed to ensure that they are able to learn, to access learning materials, and to acquire everyday living, mobility and social communication skills. According to this definition:

"A child or young person can be considered to have a vision impairment if this interferes with optimal development, learning and achievements unless adaptations are made in the methods of presenting learning experiences, the nature of the materials used and / or the learning environment. This definition includes children and young people with other disabilities / impairments in addition to vision, including those with profound and complex needs. The term 'learning' includes not just academic learning but the acquisition of mobility, life and social skills that, in the case of a child or young person with a vision impairment, would be provided through habilitation education"

(NatSIP, 2020).



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