

## Policy Position Statement

# Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment in Northern Ireland

February 2023

### What we think

We want every child and young person in Northern Ireland to have equitable access to their nursery, primary, secondary and post-16 education. Every child or young person with vision impairment must be supported and enabled to achieve their potential during compulsory education in order to thrive as adults.

Children and young people (CYP) with vision impairment (VI) need additional specialist support to enable them to effectively access their learning and to develop key skills required to live and work independently in adulthood.

Despite consensus on the importance of specialist VI education to date, there has been no consistent UK wide approach for professionals and parents to support CYP with VI. The Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI) addresses this.

The CFVI is an evidence-based approach developed by professionals, children and young people, and parents and carers. It outlines 11 key

teaching areas for which CYP with VI require input from specialist educators.

The CFVI should be embedded in government policy and sit alongside the Northern Ireland Curriculum so that every CYP with VI has access to it.

## **What's the issue?**

There is inequity in education provision and support available for CYP with VI which must be addressed. CYP with VI are being disadvantaged as they are not consistently enabled to access the full breadth of educational experience and extracurricular opportunities available to their peers. Restrictions in accessing specialist support are exacerbating this inequity.

It is recognised that CYP with VI need to be taught a range of specialist skills that promote independent learning, mobility, everyday living and social communication. Evidence tells us that CYP with VI who learn these skills are more likely to achieve better long-term outcomes and move successfully into independent adulthood.

A significant challenge to specialist provision and support is that there has been no universally recognised specialist framework, shared language or agreed approach for supporting CYP with VI in Northern Ireland. This has led to confusion over what support they need and who is responsible and qualified to deliver this.

## **What the framework does**

The CFVI provides a framework to support CYP with VI to access the Northern Ireland Curriculum and to develop the broad range of skills needed to learn alongside their peers and live independently in adulthood.

The framework clarifies and defines interventions, best practice support and the range of skills that are essential for CYP with VI to develop. It also offers a shared vocabulary for specialist and non-specialist

education professionals, CYP with VI and their families. Importantly, it provides a roadmap to a more inclusive education for CYP with VI.

The framework presents outcomes within 11 areas of learning; including technology, for example the ability to touch type and read back using a screen reader for revision; accessing learning materials; habilitation, such as the ability to use mobility and orientation skills to move between lessons; and literacy, for instance the development of braille literacy to access all core curriculum areas.

## **Recommendations**

The Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment is an evidence based and robust approach to support children and young people with vision impairment to have the opportunity to engage fully with their education.

For this to be achieved we are calling for the CFVI:

- To be recognised and referenced in Northern Ireland SEN policies, including any new SEN legislation.
- To be embedded in Education Authority service delivery frameworks.
- To be followed by all educational settings supporting children and young people with vision impairment and their families, in partnership with vision impairment specialists.
- To be embedded within quality standards for teachers of children with vision impairment and habilitation specialists across the UK.

## **For further information**

You can read more about the statement here [Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment | RNIB](#)

For further information please contact [CYPF@rnib.org.uk](mailto:CYPF@rnib.org.uk)

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