

The Partially Sighted Society



Information Sheet

The New System of Registration

Until recently, people with very poor sight were registered either as blind or partially sighted with their local Social Services Department after certification by an Ophthalmologist of Consultant status. Certification was completed through form BD8 which has been in use for many years with various modifications. We have discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the BD8 system in this journal many times.

There have been criticisms of the BD8 from numerous sources for some time. It has been clear that it did not satisfy the needs of the medical profession or those of social work and rehabilitation practitioners. More importantly perhaps, it gave little useful information to the person with a visual impairment and it often took some considerable time for the form to be completed, sent to the appropriate department and action taken on your behalf. As a consequence people were often left without adequate support and advice for long periods after the recognition of the visual impairment. It is well known that the earlier that support and advice are available, the better the chance of successful rehabilitation.

The new system is being put in place nationally after considerable consultation with people with a visual impairment and organisations of and for people with a visual impairment. However, it is not necessarily being applied as a total package in all areas at the same time

Form BD8 is replaced by the Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) which will be completed by a Consultant Ophthalmologist and sent to a Social Services Department, or a voluntary organisation designated as their agent, to let them know that someone has vision at a level which fits the criteria for registration.

However, it is important to remember that Certification is not an essential pre-requisite for getting appropriate help from your Social Services Department.

Alongside the new CVI are referral letters which may be given to you by a high street optician or a hospital eye clinic.

If your daily life is being disrupted by poor vision, the Letter of Vision Impairment (LVI) may be given to you by a high street optician. It is a standard letter, which you can fill in yourself, by ticking boxes and adding specific pieces of information, and send to your local Social Services Department. Their address should already have been filled in. You can give information about the particular problems caused by your poor vision and ask for information about the support, advice and services which might be available.

There are some helpful notes given with the Letter to give you some information about local and national services which might be helpful to you. It is a basic “contact” guide.

When the high street optician gives you this letter he (she) will probably, with your permission, make arrangements for you to visit the local hospital eye clinic to be seen by a Consultant Ophthalmologist.

It may be that the optician does not offer you the LVI or, for many reasons, it may be that you decide not to complete it and send it to your local Social Services Department. In these circumstances you will have a second chance to be referred for help when you visit the hospital eye clinic.

When you visit the hospital eye clinic they may, with your permission, complete the Referral of Vision Impaired Patient (RVI) form.

This form will give information about your circumstances and ask for an assessment to be made to determine your particular needs. It will also give some indication about how urgent it is for you to receive support and advice. If you are having continuing treatment at the hospital eye clinic, support and help can be put in place during that time if necessary.

The LVI and RVI can be put into action when you are having problems in your daily life as a result of your poor vision. However, when your vision reaches a specified level you will be eligible, if you wish, to be registered with your local Social Services Department. For this to take place your Consultant Ophthalmologist must complete the CVI. This is a much simpler form than the BD8 and it is hoped that this will make the registration process quicker. The CVI should automatically ensure an assessment of your needs by the local Social Services Department.

Once the registration process is complete you will probably be given a card which confirms that you are registered and may be helpful in proving that fact to other organisations and service providers.

Registration is not compulsory, you should be asked whether you are willing to be registered. However, remember that registration does not affect your condition in any way. It gives no indication of whether the condition is permanent or likely to improve or deteriorate. That kind of information should be sought at your hospital eye clinic. Registration may be helpful in facilitating your access to some services and benefits.

The statistics on registration are often used in helping Social Services Departments, voluntary agencies and other providers to make appropriate plans for arranging future service provision.

The BD8 used to describe people as either “blind” or “partially sighted”. The new form distinguishes between people who are “severely sight impaired or blind” and those who are “sight impaired or partially sighted”.

Remember, this new system is intended to be helpful and give you a quicker and easier route to appropriate support and advice. However, it is worth repeating that it is not compulsory for you to use the system. You can approach your local Social Services Department and ask for help if your daily life is seriously disrupted by poor vision. If you do this then they will almost certainly arrange for an assessment to be carried out.

If you need help, ask for it through your local Social Services Department whether or not you are eligible for registration.

This new system is still under review and may change somewhat in the future. However, it is doubtful whether there will be substantial changes in the immediate future.