

The 'Eye Know' Project

A guide for family carers and supporters about eye tests for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD)



In Wokingham, 'SeeAbility' is running a project, which aims to improve eye care services for people with learning disabilities. This project is called 'Eye Know' and is supported by NHS Berkshire and Wokingham Learning Disability Partnership Board.

Key messages being promoted by SeeAbility are that:

- **EVERYONE** should have their eyes checked every 2 years
- **NO-ONE** is too disabled to have their eyes checked

Regular eye tests are crucial for early detection of eye conditions such as glaucoma and cataracts. Eye tests can also help carers understand any limitations a person with PMLD may have with their sight.

Two optician's services are involved in this project and to increase the accessibility of their services for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) a number of measures have been taken:

- Staff have received specialist training to help them understand the needs of people with PMLD
- The opticians have a range of specialist resources and tools to help them assess the health and sight of people with learning disabilities, including people with PMLD
- Provision has been made for home visits to be carried out when it is not possible for a person with learning disabilities to access the opticians
- A longer appointment time will be allocated if necessary

Liz is mother to Zoe who has PMLD and severe epilepsy and describes their experience:

"I had thought that it would not be possible to carry out a meaningful eye test on Zoe - how wrong I was!

The optician clearly had experience of dealing with people with learning disabilities. He worked with Zoe, only doing what she was happy with and checking with me, her main carer, the best way to approach the various tests. Although it was not possible to complete all the checks and tests at this visit, he was able to tell that Zoe has a level of short-sightedness, a squint and that the optic nerve in her right eye is fine. All this provides a useful baseline for future appointments, which the optician recommended should be annual.

I felt that Zoe was far more relaxed and comfortable throughout than I would have thought possible. For example she tolerated having a light shone in her eyes! I'm sure this was because the optician was himself relaxed, patient and sensitive to Zoe's reactions and body language. All in all I believe this has been a positive experience for both Zoe and I and one we'll happily repeat next year."

For further information contact Mary Codling on 0118 949 2932. The opticians contact details are:

Stephen Aberly and Partners
46 Gypsy Lane
Earley
Reading
RG6 7HD
0118 935 1975

(This service is wheelchair accessible)

Scrivens
22 Market Place
Wokingham
RG40 1AP
0118 978 9311

(This service is not wheelchair accessible)