

# Information on Vision Impairments



# Vision Impairment

**Every person's sight is different.**

**Two people with the same condition, may see differently.**

Vision impairment is a term used to describe any kind of vision loss, that impacts on a person's ability to carry out activities of daily living. Some people cannot see at all or some have partial vision loss.

- Sight conditions may be congenital, have onset during childhood, or later in life, or as a result of another medical condition, stroke, or due to injury...
- Sight conditions may be due to a physical difference or damage to the eye or brain.
- Vision may change and/or progress over time.
- Changes in sight can also be due to health or environmental factors.



## No Vision Impairment



- Clear vision, High acuity



## Patchy Vision e.g. Diabetic Retinopathy



- The number, darkness and location of dark ‘patches’ changes depending on person
- Sensitivity to glare/direct light
- Difficulties with fine detail work and mobility
- Lack of public understanding: “How come you can do this but not that?”
- DR is the most common cause of slight loss in people of working age in Ireland



## Peripheral Vision Loss: e.g. RP, Glaucoma



- Unable to see obstacles unless directly in front
- Night blindness, difficulty adjusting to changes in lighting levels and in bright sunshine
- Glare sensitivity
- May be able to read, do detailed tasks and see colour
- Lack of understanding “You can read, you don’t need a stick or guide dog!”





# Central vision loss e.g. Macular Degeneration, Stargardt Disease



- Gradual decline with dark or empty spaces blocking central vision
- Dimming of colour vision
- Distorted vision, difficulties in depth perception
- Difficulty with reading, writing and recognising faces



## Blurred vision– eg Cataract



- Feeling of looking through fog
- Blurred vision or haze
- Glare sensitivity
- Reduced acuity – difficulty with detail work, reading or recognising faces
- Affects movement or fine



## Blurred Vision, eg Nystagmus



- Caused by uncontrollable rapid eye movements
- Double or shaky vision
- May cause difficulties reading print, focusing on fine details





## Peripheral Vision Loss: e.g. RP, Glaucoma



- Unable to see obstacles unless directly in front
- Night blindness, difficulty adjusting to changes in lighting levels and in bright sunshine
- Glare sensitivity
- May be able to read, do detailed tasks and see colour
- Lack of understanding “You can read, you don’t need a stick or guide dog!”



## Peripheral Vision Loss: e.g. RP, Glaucoma



- Unable to see obstacles unless directly in front
- Night blindness, difficulty adjusting to changes in lighting levels and in bright sunshine
- Glare sensitivity
- May be able to read, do detailed tasks and see colour
- Lack of understanding “You can read, you don’t need a stick or guide dog!”



## Hemianopia, eg stroke



- May be the result of a stroke, brain tumour, trauma
- Bumping into objects on the affected side
- Reading, road crossings, locating food on plate



# Albinism



- Sensitivity to light and glare
- Decreased clarity of vision
- Difficulties with depth perception
- May present also with nystagmus, refractive error



# Including People with Vision Impairments

- Communication is key when coaching people with a vision impairment.
- Talk to the participant prior to the session, to understand their sight level and personal support needs.
- Use the individual's name to get their attention.
- Allow adequate time for the participant to orientate the environment and equipment, prior to the session and throughout.
- Always begin teaching any new skill or technique with verbal descriptions (try to paint a picture in participants mind) before moving on with the activity.
- Always ask if physical contact is wanted with a guide.
- Offer support instead of grabbing, pushing or pulling participant
- Use continued verbal descriptions – if possible, you, as the coach, should picture the skill and describe it as accurately as possible; communication and patience are key
- Be aware that some people with vision impairment's sight may vary from day to day or at different times of day, going from dark to bright or vice versa. It is therefore important to check with your participant prior to each session.





# Including People with Vision Impairments

- Contrast – use equipment that has a contrasting colour to that of the playing surface or background. Try use strong contrasting colours to help distinguish between playing surfaces, playing equipment and the participants. As the coach, you should wear a different coloured top, in a colour the participant can see

Venue is also important for the following reasons:

- It should be as close to accessible public transport as possible as some players may be unable to drive.
- It should have as little external noise as possible so that players can clearly hear the ball, the coach, their teammates and the referees. Try to avoid sharing a space with another activity.
- It should have lighting that is helpful for as many players as possible. This can be tricky as players with different visual impairments often prefer different types of lighting.



# Guiding a Player

You may be asked to guide at some stage. The basic rule is that the person to be guided takes the elbow or places their hand on the shoulder of the guide and follows accordingly.

Here are some other basic rules of guiding a blind or visually impaired person:

- When going through a gap the guide's arm moves behind their back and this indicates that the guided person moves in behind the guide
- When approaching steps, the guide should tell the guided person whether the steps are up or down
- When guiding a person to a chair you should place their hand on the back of the chair and then they will be able to sit independently
- When guiding someone into a vehicle you should place their hand on the side of the door, and they will usually be able to seat themselves from this position
- As with most people someone with a visual impairment will not want to be taken by the arm and led or pushed.

Top tips:

- Walk in front of the player to see upcoming hazards or obstacles
- Highlight obstacles and challenges early
- Be yourself and communicate in the normal way

