

The Partially Sighted Society



Certificate of Vision Impairment

The Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) is issued by the consultant ophthalmologist at your local NHS hospital and is used to certify a person as sight impaired (partially sighted) or severely sight impaired (blind), respectively prior to registration.

The consultant ophthalmologist will decide whether you meet the criteria for certification by measuring:

- Visual acuity – central vision, the vision used to see detail;
- Visual field – how much can be seen around the edge of the vision, while looking straight ahead.

Visual acuity is measured by reading down an eye chart (Snellen chart) while wearing any glasses or contact lenses. The field of vision is measured by a 'visual field test'.

After the vision has been assessed, the consultant ophthalmologist will decide if you are eligible for your sight loss to be certified. The consultant can certify you as either severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted) by completing the Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) in England and Wales. In Scotland it's called BP1, in Northern Ireland it's called A655.

Purpose of the CVI

The purpose of the CVI is to formally certify you as sight impaired or severely sight impaired so that the local council can then proceed with the registration. Registration is voluntary, and access to various, or to some, benefits and social services

is not dependent on registration. The visual impairment also acts as a referral for a social care assessment .

Another purpose of the CVI is to provide important statistics about the causes of sight loss and amount of people living with sight loss in the UK.

What is a Snellen test and what do the numbers mean?

The Snellen test is the chart of letters or numbers ranging from big to small and is used to determine how well a person sees with and without glasses.

	A	Top line is 6/60 *
<hr/>		
	H D	6/36
	P N F	6/24
	X U A D	6/18
	H U X P C	6/12
	N C A F D T	6/6 'normal vision
<hr/>		

*This chart is for illustrative purposes only.

On the Snellen scale, normal visual acuity is called 6/6, which corresponds to the bottom or second bottom line of the chart. The first number given is the distance in metres from the chart you sit when you read it. Usually this is a 6 (for 6 metres) but would be 3 if you were to sit closer to the chart (3 metres away).

The second number corresponds to the number of lines that you are able to read on the chart. If you can only read the top line of the chart then this would be written as 6/60. This means you can see at 6 metres what someone with standard vision could see from 60 metres away. Someone with standard vision can read towards the bottom of the chart and is referred to as having 6/6 vision.

For example, if you had a Snellen score of 6/36, you would only be able to read the same line at 6 metres away. Generally the larger the second number is, the worse your sight is.

What do the results of your vision test mean?

The ophthalmologist uses a combination of your visual acuity and field of vision to judge whether you are eligible to be certified, and at which level. If you have a good visual acuity, you will usually have had to have lost a large part of your visual field to be certified as severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted).

If you have all your visual field, you will usually have to have a very poor visual acuity to be certified as severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted).

In order to be certified as severely sight impaired (blind), your sight has to fall into one of the following categories, while wearing any glasses or contact lenses:

- Visual acuity of less than 3/60 with a full visual field.
- Visual acuity between 3/60 and 6/60 with a severe reduction of field of vision, such as tunnel vision.
- Visual acuity of 6/60 or above but with a very reduced field of vision, especially if a lot of sight is missing in the lower part of the field.

To be certified as sight impaired (partially sighted) your sight has to fall into one of the following categories, while wearing any glasses or contact lenses that you may need:

- Visual acuity of 3/60 to 6/60 with a full field of vision.
- Visual acuity of up to 6/24 with a moderate reduction of field of vision or with a central part of vision that is cloudy or blurry.
- Visual acuity of 6/18 or even better if a large part of your field of vision is missing or a lot of your peripheral vision is missing.

Sight loss in one eye

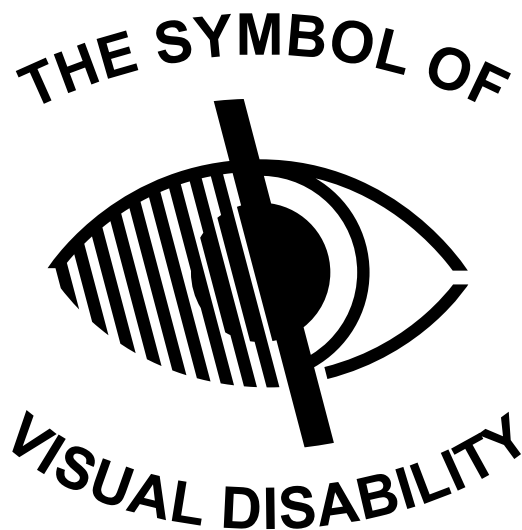
If you have lost the sight in one eye, but still have full vision in the other eye the ophthalmologist will not be able to certify you as sight impaired or severely sight impaired. This is because your other eye will largely compensate for the loss of sight in the affected eye.

What happens next

The ophthalmologist will send copies of the certificate to you, your GP and your local social services department. You can then choose to be registered with your local social services if you wish to.

If you, or anyone you know is experiencing difficulties with sight loss The Partially Sighted Society are here to help.

- **Enhanced Low Vision Assessments to help you make the best use of your remaining vision**
- **NHS sight test facility**
- **Support groups**
- **Large range of aids and equipment**
- **Telephone help and advice**
- **Visual Awareness Training for Professionals and Carers**
- **Printers of heavily lined stationery**



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