



*Angel
Eyes*
NI

**ACCESSIBLE SPORT AND
RECREATION FOR VISUALLY
IMPAIRED CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE
VOLUNTEER TRAINING**

SPORTED *Angel Eyes NI*
INCLUDE PROJECT



Department for
Communities



ST. JAMES'S PLACE
FOUNDATION





The purpose of this training is to educate volunteers supporting mainstream sports clubs how to instruct meaningfully with blind and partially sighted participants to ensure the young person is included in the club.

INCLUDED IN THE TRAINING WILL BE

1. Information on Visual Impairment
2. Preparation
3. Good Communication
4. Basic Guiding Tips and Techniques
5. Teaching Strategies
6. Adapting Environment, Activities and Instruction
7. Social Interaction and inclusion
8. Health and Safety Considerations
9. Helpful Resources and Equipment

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- Confidence to support a child or young person with sight loss
- Knowledge of sight loss
- Tips on how to guide
- Importance of preparation
- A range of teaching techniques
- How to keep blind and partially students safe

IMPACT TO CLUBS PARTICIPATING

- Knowledge of Visual Impairment
- Fully Trained volunteers
- Links to help and support
- Confidence to encourage visually impaired young people to join your club



1. VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Visual impairment is when one or more parts of the eye or brain that are needed to process images become diseased or damaged

80% OF LEARNING HAPPENS FROM VISION

There are different types and levels of visual impairments.

- Acuity problems which reduces clarity of vision.
- Visual field loss including peripheral vision, central vision or visual fields
- Inconsistent vision which means some days children will have poorer vision than on other days due to eye condition or contributing factors
- Visual loss can be part of a bigger picture of disability including learning needs, Downs Syndrome, physical disability, autism and cerebral palsy

Factors that can affect vision

- Light
- Tiredness
- Time of day
- Outdoors and Indoors
- Contrast
- Weather
- Speed of activity



Sight is broken down into two categories

- Severely Sight Impaired – this means the participant can have some vision or be blind
- Sight Impaired – this can mean the participant will have some useable functional vision. They may be able to navigate an environment but may struggle to see demonstrations or facial clues

Everyone is different and that is the same for people with visual impairments so try to understand what that individual can see and how you can support them to maximise the sight they have.

Ask the participant what level of vision they have.

2. PREPARATION

Always speak to the participant about what would help them and how their needs might change in different conditions – weather, lighting, speed etc. They are the experts of their own sight condition and can help you work out the best solution.

Encourage the children to come along and talk to the coaches or leaders before any activity or sport.

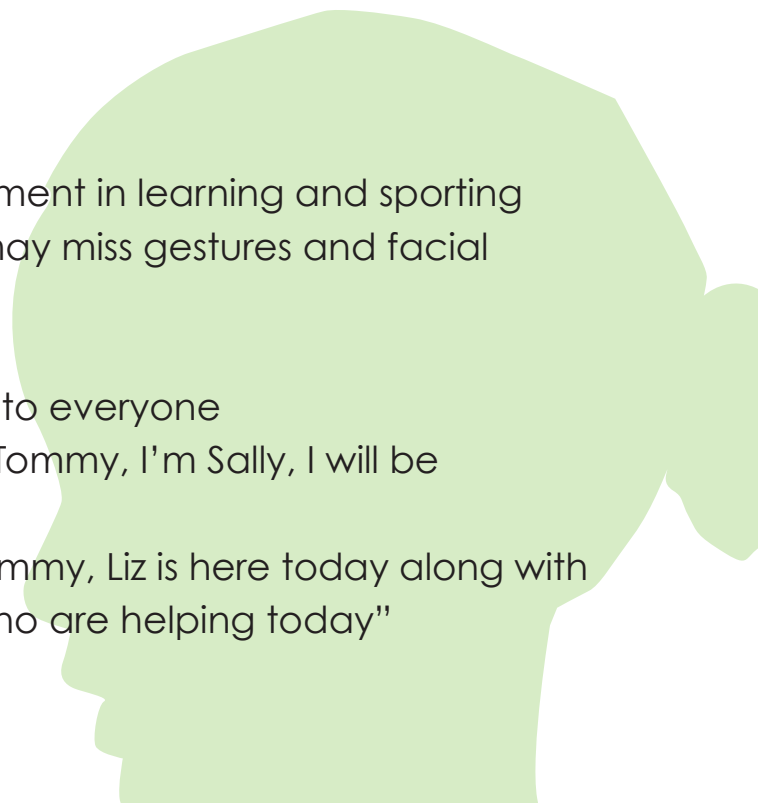
Things you need to know:

- Eye condition and how it impacts the participant with the activity
- Print size or braille? This is to ensure resources are adapted before sessions – never ask another child to read instructions or rules to the visually impaired child if everyone is reading it.
Alternatively explain orally to all participants
- Cane user? What mobility assistance do they require
- Any other needs?
- Can you make this accessible to the child – do you need further support?
- Orientate the child around the environment ahead of session – show toilets, entrance, exit and any potential hazards like a kerb or step

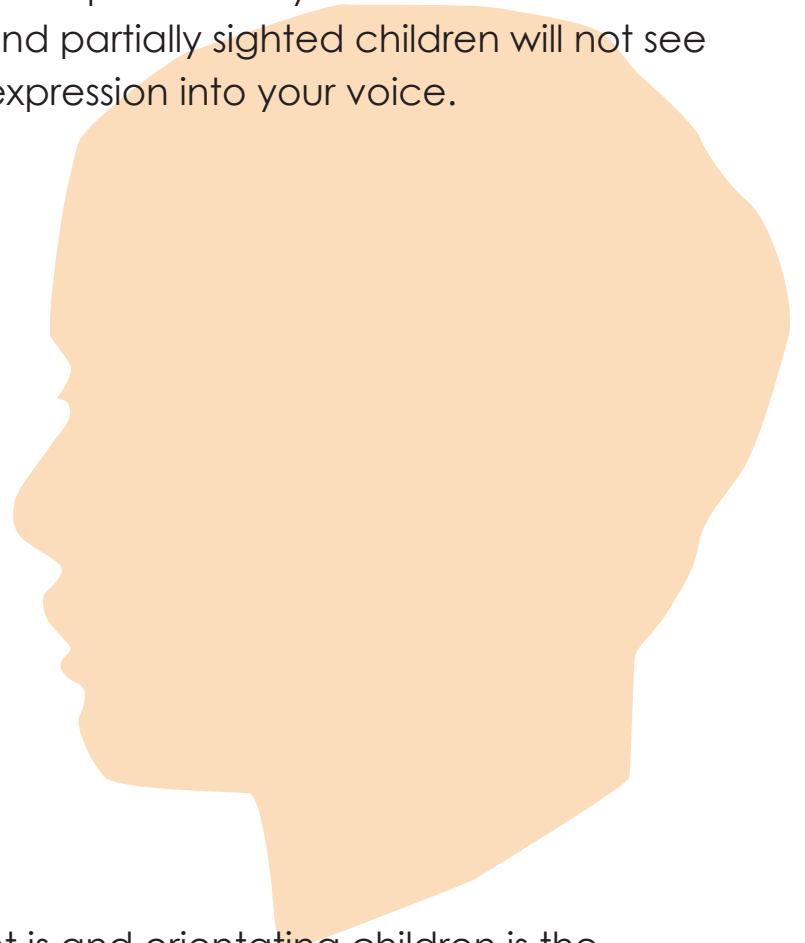
3. GOOD COMMUNICATION

This is a vital aspect of promoting engagement in learning and sporting activities, even partially sighted children may miss gestures and facial expressions.

- Make sure that you explain the activity to everyone
- Greet a child by saying your name “Hi Tommy, I’m Sally, I will be coaching today”
- Introduce the other people present “Tommy, Liz is here today along with Gordon, they are the other coaches who are helping today”



- Always address the child by name before giving instruction “Sandra, we are going to warm up by jogging on the spot, then we can have a drink”
- Avoid using gestures alone (or facial expressions) for communicating with visually impaired children, always add a verbal description
- Let the child know if someone leaves or joins the group
- A giggle is the blind child’s smile – it is important for your voice to reflect excitement to see the child, blind and partially sighted children will not see your smile, so you need to put this expression into your voice.



4. BASIC GUIDING TECHNIQUES

Communicating what the environment is and orientating children is the key objective when a child joins a club. If the environment or the activity changes this needs to be repeated. If a child is participating it is important, they know how big the area is.

- Orientation should be done before other participants arrive, prior to the session
- When guiding a child ask what support they need. If you they need support/guiding – offer them your elbow (do not take them by the hand) and explain verbally to them about upcoming changes in their environment such as a door opening on the left, stairs, a mat, benches etc
- If the child is sitting at a table doing an activity describe to them what is in front of them. A child with partially sight will not see what is on the other side of the table.

- Partially sighted children can usually manage quite well to negotiate running around – they may need someone letting them know if the ball is heading in the opposite direction. A blind child can be buddied up to a coach or another child using the elbow technique
- For a sport that uses a court or pitch the boundaries can be defined with rope being taped to the ground, or if the child has sight using good contrast tape
- Ensure the goal keeper shouts to the team that the partially sighted participant is on to ensure they keep orientated to their goal posts
- With the child's permission, using them as the model for teaching the team or class a new technique will give that child hands on instruction
- When going through a doorway move your guiding arm backward to the middle of your back

5. TEACHING STRATEGIES

For a child to understand a new sport or activity it is important for them to understand the terminology, strategy and purpose of the game.

- Tactile resources are a good way for children to understand the boundaries, goals, positions and strategies – see example
- This technique can be used for other sports including dimensions of a park run or court
- Pre-teaching gives the visually impaired child adequate time to understand what the activity will be before it begins. This is useful for any new activity or the progression of a sport
- Whole-part-whole is specifically teaching the child what the whole skill or activity is right from the beginning. That is then broken down into the small movements needed to perform the whole activity. Feedback is key to performance and can be physical or verbal. Without the whole, the individual parts are meaningless
- Teaching the whole skill or game to a child with a visual impairment takes time, energy and creativity.
- The whole can be taught through verbal instruction, task analysis and tactile teaching
- Use the child if they are willing to demonstrate the activity
- Use hand under hand technique to demonstrate new activities

It is important for the child to understand the type of movement required for the activity or sport. For example, an underhand throw can be demonstrated hand under hand or how to use the reins when horse riding.

Another important element for demonstrating or modelling the movement/activity is to have enthusiastic, competent volunteers who are demonstrating what the instructor or coach is doing.

- Modelling movements must be accompanied with verbal explanation
- When physically guiding to demonstrate movement, it is important to tell the participant what you will be doing before you do it
- Not all children like to be physically touched so tactile models/dolls can be a good way to help the child understand the movement required



6. ADAPTING ENVIRONMENT, ACTIVITIES AND INSTRUCTION

With preparation, ingenuity and flexibility children who are blind or partially sighted can access sports and clubs. There are lots of ways to adapt different activities to suit the needs of the participants. Be open and creative and don't be afraid to ask if it works.

The generic principles are sound, brightness, colour, speed and contrast

- Be aware of potential hazards – bags at side-lines, benches in different places
- Balls can come in different colours with sounds
- Tennis balls can be bigger, slower and brighter
- Catching can be made easier by putting the ball in a sock
- If a child is running on grass don't use green cones – use yellow or orange
- Make sure all doors are either all the way open or closed
- Try and keep equipment in the same place but if you move it tell the child
- On bright sunny days, be aware this could affect the child – can you do the activity indoors or think about caps/sunglasses and facing away from the sun

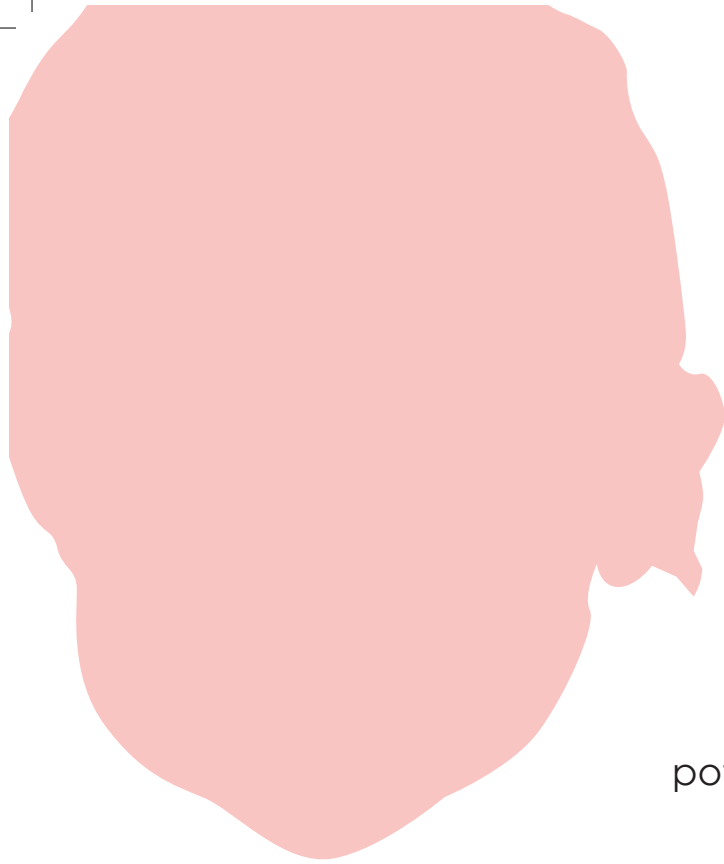
- Place an auditory clue in goals – bells on the bar
- Using tactile markers to mark out boundaries of playing areas which can reinforce tactile resources
- Have a trained volunteer/peer supporting appropriately
- Organise the playing area so it is not cluttered and easy for the participant to orientate
- Explain to the participant before the activity begins what will happen
- Think about any handouts for participants – do you need to enlarge them, or provide in Braille

7. SOCIAL INTERACTION

It is not just the sport or activity that is important to make accessible but also the social interaction. We have explained how important communication is to participate in sport, but also to be part of the club and ensure a meaningful experience. Infusion of these important concepts are worth the time and effort as they lead to independence and inclusion for children with a visual impairment.

- Introduce yourself and others – don't assume the child will remember or recognise you
- Explain what the activity is that day and what equipment will be used, where it is etc
- Think about how the other children interact with the visually impaired participant. Try and facilitate friendships by doing ice breakers and budding children together
- Demystify visual impairment to their peers – try and break down any barriers
- Promote independence and leadership opportunities as team captain or asking them to model activities
- Encourage the child to advocate for their needs and they understand how to help make the sport or activity accessible for them
- Be vigilant for teasing or bullying





8. HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

There are some health and safety considerations that coaches and volunteers may need to consider when a visually impaired young person joins a club.

Specific risks should be considered as part of the usual risk assessment for the activity and action taken to minimise any potential risks as much as possible.

Make sure that there is a procedure in place to support a visually impaired participant in a fire evacuation.

9. HELPFUL RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT

Each child and eye condition and how they cope with it is individual to them. There are organisations and resources which can help you to make your club as accessible as it can be.

[Guide Dogs NI Habilitation Service](#) – trained Habilitation specialists can train clubs in how to guide.

[RNIBNI Children and Family Services](#) – information on specific eye conditions and shop for resources

[Disability Sport NI](#) – provide training to clubs to help adapt activities

[Sport NI](#) – signposting to other organisations

[Irish Football Association](#) – a weekly football club in Lisburn for blind and partially sighted children

[CIYMS Blind Tennis Club](#) – a weekly tennis club for blind and partially sighted children

Currently each of the 11 Council areas in Northern Ireland have the following range of specialised equipment available for clubs supporting people with visual impairment.

- 1 Sensory Activity Pack (consists of a Goalball kit, Futsal bell balls, flashing bounce balls, sensory bean bags, low compression Tennis balls & ASC squeeze machine)
- 4 x Dawes Duet Tandem Cycles

Other useful equipment includes

- High vis vests and cones
- When playing football use a hockey net (so the ball will make a sound on the baseboard)
- Bells on wristbands for chasing games
- Auditory clues in goals
- Balls with jingles or sounds



Angry



Devastated



Afraid



Frustrated



Isolated



Alone



Different



Lost



Confused



Numb



Anxious



Uninformed

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