# Seeing you through

Blind Low Vision NZ

Formerly Blind Foundation

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# Transcriber's Notes

Images have been omitted.

If reading this volume on a portable braille device, note that this e-text is unproofed by touch.

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# Welcome

Coming to terms with sight difficulties can be hard, whether it affects you, whanau or a friend. You might be wondering how life will change, how you or your loved one will get around independently and safely, access information and continue with everyday life.

This booklet provides information about how Blind Low Vision NZ can help. It is a handy resource for those who are experiencing sight loss and their loved ones.

Every day Blind Low Vision NZ helps Kiwis who are blind or have low vision find the best ways to do the things they want in life through practical and emotional support. We are passionate about supporting people with sight loss to live the life they choose and do the things they need and want to do to participate fully in society.

We are committed to making a big difference through leading the way in vision rehabilitation, advocating for inclusive communities, and contributing to New Zealand's eye health awareness.

We look forward to helping you continue doing the things that are important to you, and introducing you to some new skills too.

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## Who we help

We work with people who are living with no or limited useful sight, impacting day-to-day tasks, even when they're wearing their best corrective lenses. Approximately three quarters of the people we work with have some vision (which we call low vision).

No one's sight is the same—many people we work with will have one or more of the four most common eye diseases causing blindness and partial sight in New Zealand:

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD), diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and cataracts. Even within these areas there is great variance, so we work closely on a one to one basis for the best solutions depending your needs.

Box:

## Learning more about your eye condition

There are many types, degrees and definitions of blindness. Ophthalmologists, optometrists and other health professionals can provide more information to help you learn about your eye condition and what it will mean for you.

We advise you to talk to your eye care specialist or optometrist about how often you should return for an eye check and always seek specialist advice if you notice unexpected changes in your vision.

You can speak with your key contact person or call Blind Low Vision NZ Contact Centre on 0800 24 33 33 to find out about the full range of services in your area.

End box.

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## How we can help

We are New Zealand's main provider of vision rehabilitation, which provides practical and emotional support for people with vision loss. Our services are funded in part by the government, and mostly by the New Zealand public.

We understand that the ability to get on with everyday life is an important part of retaining or regaining independence. Losing your vision does not mean that you'll have to give up your independence or activities you currently enjoy.

You might be surprised by the range of ways we can help you adapt to sight loss with new skills for everyday tasks. Whatever it is you want to accomplish—from daily chores around your home and getting around your community; to using technology with ease, continuing work or study and taking part in recreation activities—we can help you get there.

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## Accessing our services

Once you've registered as a Blind Low Vision NZ client, a member of our team will work with you to ensure you get the right service from the start.

At this time we will discuss any difficulties you are experiencing as a result of your sight loss, what you wish to accomplish and the services available to help you retain your independence. Together we will work with you to develop a plan of action and connect you to our specialists and networks, so you can meet your goals.

If you haven't connected with us yet, simply call us on 0800 24 33 33 or complete the form on our website [blindlowvision.org.nz/contact/access-services](https://blindlowvision.org.nz/contact/access-services) to request services, and we will be in touch.

It will be helpful if you have the following information ready:

* Your contact details
* Next of kin or alternative contact
* The name of your Ophthalmologist or eye health practitioner

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# Our services

## Personalised rehabilitation services

### Getting around

Blind Low Vision NZ experts can show you how to move around safely, confidently, and independently.

Whether it's to work, the shops, school or sports, you might learn to use a mobility aid such as a white cane or a guide dog, how to be guided by other people and how to manage crossing roads.

You might be entitled to discounted public transport supported by our Blind Low Vision NZ identification cards.

There is also the publicly-funded Total Mobility Scheme, which provides taxi subsidies for people who cannot easily use public transport.

We can help you navigate your options, depending on where you live and what you want to do.

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### At home

To help you live independently at home, our team provides tips, techniques and information about useful products and skills that can help you accomplish a wide range of everyday tasks, including home modifications, kitchen adaptations and household organisation.

Whatever your goals, we can help you achieve them safely and effectively.

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## Using technology and accessing information

### Adaptive technology

Accessible technology has never been more exciting for people with sight loss. Computers now have in-built functions such as screen enhancements, narrators and magnifiers, and many devices and apps are being developed with the specific needs of people who are blind or have low vision in mind.

Our adaptive technology courses offer training with these functions, and cover topics such as word processing, spreadsheets, email and using the internet for accessing services, reading the news, social networking, shopping, travelling and accessing books. We also provide training in the use of devices such as iPads and iPhones, scanning systems and specialised notetaking devices.

### Accessible formats

To keep you connected to the things you love we are able to turn printed material into a variety of accessible formats which you can read, such as large print, braille, electronic text, collage and a range of audio formats. Requests can be made for personal information to be converted to your preferred format. Examples include tactile maps, recipes, sheet music and exam materials.

Photograph: Amazon Alexa smart speaker.

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### Staying in touch

If you're needing help to continue to read and write, manage your money or access information, rest assured there is specialised equipment and courses that can make all the difference in managing your life when you are blind or have low vision. Some tools include:

* Low vision magnifiers: These can be small enough to fit into your pocket or purse. There are also larger models, known as video magnifiers, for reading books, newspapers, and other information in front of you.
* Braille: Invented in 1824 this simple raised dot system is still considered by many people as the best reading system for people who are blind.

Our Braille equipment can open up a world of information for children and adults alike. Today braille works with and enhances technology. Its uses range from labelling everyday items and writing down phone numbers to reading books and using computers. Blind Low Vision NZ has a team of experts to help you learn this new skill if you wish.

"The first time I put my fingers on those little dots I was able to read again, it was a magnificent feeling. But it wasn't just about the reading, I was able to write again too, and that felt liberating."

Julie, Professional Speaker and Coach

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## Help with employment

If you are working, our Employment team can help you continue in your job. We will work with you and your employer to help put solutions in place for any issues you are having.

This could involve coordinating workplace technology assessments, adapting work areas and addressing health and safety concerns. We can also help you apply for government funding for any disability-related support, training or equipment for your job.

If you are job-seeking or want to begin tertiary study, we can help with that too. Our Employment team can work with you to identify your employment and study goals and develop a plan for reaching these. Support may include helping you develop pre-employment skills such as writing a CV, applying for jobs and preparing for interviews, as well as accessing employment and study opportunities.

"Blind Low Vision NZ helped give me stability and the opportunities that have helped set me up for life."

Ese, Music Teacher

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## Community and support

Blind Low Vision NZ offers a range of practical and emotional support to our clients, as well as their families, friends, and caregivers. Whether you want to talk to someone about what you're going through, connect with other people with sight loss, or get involved in your local community to continue doing the things you love—we can help.

### Counselling

Working with a counsellor can be one of the best ways to support you and your family and to help you manage the impact of sight loss with dignity and self-respect.

First and foremost, our counsellors listen. They then work with you to explore your feelings and concerns in a safe and respectful environment. Confidentiality is a big part of our relationship and is respected at all times. If it is your child or teenager who is struggling with their vision, Blind Low Vision NZ offers counselling support with Child and Family Social Workers/Counsellors. They can help by working directly with your child, or giving you the skills and confidence you need to support them. Your counsellor can visit you in your home, or you can visit one of our offices, whichever works best for you.

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## Connecting with other people with sight loss

### Community support groups

Community Support Groups exist in local communities across New Zealand. The volunteers who make up the groups include clients, family and whanau, local health professionals and others interested in supporting Blind Low Vision NZ's work. They are involved in many different activities which bring people who are blind or have low vision together.

### Telefriend

Telefriend is a phone peer support service available for you, your family and friends. It offers the chance to talk to other people who understand from their own experience. Staffed by trained volunteers who are blind or have low vision themselves, Telefriend is a caring, confidential service protected by a code of practice.

You can reach Telefriend on 0800 100 051 (Monday to Friday, 1:00pm to 4:00pm). Outside of these hours, please leave a message and the call will be returned.

### Peer mentoring programme

Our Peer Mentoring and Facilitated Peer Support Programme is offered throughout New Zealand for those who have a lived experience of low vision or blindness to share their experiences and skills with others. Mentors and mentees meet on a regular basis either in person, via phone or online and work together on goals set by the mentee.

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Mentoring and peer support relationships could be focused on any number of areas relating to living life as someone who is blind or has low vision.

### Hobbies and keeping active

Many special interest groups and activities exist around the country, tailored for people who are blind or have low vision. Activities range from tramping and kayaking to card games and crafts, art appreciation, garden, meditation and music groups. Several other organisations offer specialist activities such as sailing, cricket and bowling.

"Being active is very important for me healthwise and mentally. I am a passionate, competitive bowler, an avid gardener, and walk about 10km's a day with my beautiful (guide dog) Jackson."

David

Box:

We are always keen to hear about your own hobbies and social interests. That way, we can help you to get the most out of whatever activity you choose while feeling safe.

End box.

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## Library services

One of our most loved services is our library which has over 30,000 talking books, magazines, and braille books. You can borrow items on a range of subjects similar to those found in your local library.

There are a number of ways you can access our library, the newest being through a "skill" on an Amazon Alexa smart speaker, giving you instant access to our entire library using only your voice and an internet connection. Downloadable audio books, magazines and newspapers are available to listen to on your computer or mobile device also through our Booklink website and app.

For children we can produce electronic texts (e-text), and have a range of other formats such as Kitsets, Large Print, Collage and Twin Vision. We also create children's picture books to feel, instead of see, for pre-school and early readers.

Whatever your preference is to read we will have something to suit your needs.

To find out more about our library service, please call 0800 24 33 33 or email library@blindlowvision.org.nz

"Having an Alexa in the house is just the same as having another person, I think that's fantastic. You've got a friend, and that's very important."

Trevor Plumbly

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## Financial support

We administer a number of funds that provide additional financial help and support to people who are blind or have low vision. If you need financial assistance meeting the costs of vision rehabilitation, or tertiary education, we may be able to help.

To find out more about applying for financial assistance please contact us at info@blindlowvision.org.nz

## Specialist services

### Younger clients

When a child is born with a visual impairment, or acquires one through illness or injury, parents may feel bewildered and frightened. Learning new skills can be challenging.

Our Parent and Child Enrichment (PACE) programme is designed to enable families to adjust to sight loss, as well as to help the child develop vital short and long-term life-centred skills and build self-esteem. If a child in your care is blind or has low vision, the PACE team (which includes the Child and Family Social Worker and the Independent Life Skills Specialist) will work with you through each stage of your child's development.

Together, we'll make sure you and your child has the support, skills and strategies to help your child make their way confidently in the world. By the time your child leaves school, they will have all the self-help skills they need to succeed as a young adult.

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### Deafblind clients

Our specialist team aims to improve the quality of life and reduce isolation for people who have both significant vision and hearing loss. If you are deafblind, we can help you find alternative ways of communicating.

We provide support by helping you access information, equipment, a full range of services, social networks and other assistance you need to participate in your community.

We work closely with The Deafblind Association NZ to deliver services to those with vision and hearing loss. The mission of the Deafblind Association of New Zealand is to foster increased understanding of deafblindness and support the self-determination of the deafblind community in facing challenges and contributing through active participation.

0800 450 650

info@deafblindassociation.nz

[deafblindassociation.nz](http://www.deafblindassociation.nz/)

### Pacific Island clients

We have specialist team members who help Pacific Island clients access our full range of services and equipment. We provide cultural support and help you to engage as fully as possible with your community.

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# How we help

## Buying equipment from us

We stock a wide range of products and helpful tools for all levels of vision that can be purchased from our online store or offices.

We also hold equipment display and Pop Up days for clients around the country, providing an opportunity to learn about different items, try some of them and place orders.

Some of our equipment, such as magnifiers and canes, is best selected with assistance from a specialist to ensure you've got the right product and you know how to use it correctly.

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For any equipment enquiries or purchases, please contact 0800 24 33 33, or email equipment.orders@blindlowvision.org.nz to place an order. Alternatively you can contact your local office.

### St John medical alarm discount

A St John medical alarm is an emergency calling device that is monitored by St John. It consists of a base unit that either connects to your home phone line or to the cellular (mobile) network, and a small pendant that you wear. The St John Medical alarm discount is available to all Blind Low Vision NZ clients who are new and existing users of the service.

Discounted rate: $13.95 per week (normally $19.95).

Discounted rate valid for two years from 1 March 2019.

To access the discounted rate, phone St John on 0800 50 23 28 and have your Blind Low Vision NZ membership number handy.

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## How we advocate for an accessible New Zealand

Blind Low Vision NZ is passionate about creating a New Zealand that's accessible for people who are blind or have low vision. We know that's good for all Kiwis. Our advocacy work influences the government to take action and improve access to information, buildings and public spaces, transport and more. We want to fix things once and for all, for everybody.

Our team works with local government, policy developers and other disability organisations to create change. We also have a voice on the international stage, working closely with the World Blind Union on major projects such as the Marrakesh Treaty.

You, your family and friends are central to the success of our advocacy work.

Contact us to get involved or find out more.

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## News and Information

### Blind Low Vision NZ online

You can find all kinds of useful information, including news, events, services, library content, equipment and resources on our website: [blindlowvision.org.nz](https://blindlowvision.org.nz)

### Outlook magazine

Published twice yearly, Outlook is our community magazine available in all accessible formats for Kiwis who are blind or have low vision. It includes Blind Low Vision NZ news, people stories, tips and information about getting involved.

### Telephone information service

The Blind Low Vision NZ's Telephone Information Service (TIS) is an easy way to get information at your fingertips. TIS enables you to listen to a variety of recorded bulletins via a landline. You can find out what's happening in your local area, hear Blind Low Vision NZ news, radio and television programme schedules, get information on special areas of interest, and find information about new books in our library.

For more information and help with TIS visit our website, call Blind Low Vision NZ on 0800 24 33 33, option 1 or email info@blindlowvision.org.nz

### Korero newsletter

We publish a monthly newsletter written for our community of Kiwis who are blind or have low vision. You can opt in to receive this via email, read it on our website or listen on TIS (menu 3411).

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## Supporting us supporting you

### Feedback on our services

We regularly ask for feedback on our services so we know what people need. We appreciate your participation to make sure we're doing a good job. We have a formal Complaints and Compliments process which we follow; receiving, acknowledging, investigating and responding to any concerns we receive. We welcome compliments which we ensure are passed on to those who have been recognised.

### Fundraising

Every day an average of six people turn to Blind Low Vision NZ for support with blindness or sight loss. Much of the practical and emotional support we provide simply wouldn't be possible without the generous support of the public.

You can help by setting up a regular donation, making a single donation, or consider continuing your support by leaving a gift in your will. If you're passionate about getting others involved you might like to fundraise for us in your local community.

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To find out more about supporting Blind Low Vision NZ, visit [blindlowvision.org.nz](https://blindlowvision.org.nz), phone 0800 366 283 or email supportercare@blindlowvision.org.nz

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## How we are governed

Blind Low Vision NZ is governed by a member-elected Board of Directors, known as the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (RNZFB) Board.

You can become a governing member if your corrected visual acuity is 6/24 or less or a residual field of less than 20 degrees in the better eye. Parents and guardians of children who are registered can also become governing members. Governing members can elect the Board of Directors, attend annual and special meetings and consult on important documents such as the strategic plan.

If you meet the criteria and would like to become a governing member, simply let our team know.

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## Our partners

A number of New Zealand organisations represent the specific interests of people who are blind or have low vision.

We partner with the organisations mentioned above as well as those following to share information, advocate for change and undertake projects of mutual benefit.

### Blind Citizens New Zealand

Blind Citizens New Zealand offers peer support and promotes social, economic and political opportunities for New Zealand's blind and vision-impaired citizens. It is the country's largest generic blindness consumer organisation.

0800 222 694

enquiries@blindcitizens.org.nz

[blindcitizens.org.nz](https://blindcitizens.org.nz)

### Blind Sport New Zealand

Blind Sport New Zealand Incorporated is New Zealand's lead organisation for Blind, Low Vision and Deafblind sport and recreation opportunity, charged with leading the growth and development of sport and physical recreation participation opportunities while providing sporting pathways to our community.

(09) 930 1579

casey@blindsport.kiwi

[blindsport.kiwi](https://blindsport.kiwi)

### Māori clients

Kāpō Māori Aotearoa provides cultural services to Māori clients. Kāpō Māori is a kaupapa Māori national provider of health and disability services, as well as a peer support organisation with a long-standing reputation in the blindness community. By engaging formally with Kāpō Māori, you will receive Māori-focused and culturally appropriate services. Kāpō Māori Aotearoa is a kaupapa Maori national provider of health and disability services based upon Māori philosophies, principles and practices. Kāpō Māori Aotearoa has an established reputation in not only

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the blindness community but also the disability community, able bodied community, and with Māori, non-Māori and government.

0800 770 990

info@kapomaori.co.nz

[kapomaori.com](https://kapomaori.com)

### New Zealand Vision Impaired Empowering Women (NZ VIEW)

VIEW is an acronym for Vision Impaired Empowering Women and is a support group for New Zealand women who are blind or have low vision. Our members are a diverse group of independent and motivated women with an aspiration for a fully accessible society that inspires and motivates women of all ages to reach their fullest potential.

(04) 476 7329

nzviewinc@gmail.com

### Retina New Zealand Inc.

Retina New Zealand Inc. supports individuals and their families or friends with Macular Degeneration, Retinitis Pigmentosa, Retinal Detachments and other rare retinal dystrophies. It promotes public awareness of retinal disorders, provides information and support to individuals and their families, and fosters research into treatments.

0800 569 849

admin@retina.org.nz

[retina.org.nz](https://retina.org.nz)

### Retina Youth

Retina Youth supports anyone between the ages of 15 and 35 with a retinal disorder or sight impairment, regardless of the degree of visual impairment. Family and friends are welcome to join too.

0800 569 849

youth@retina.org.nz

[retinayouth.org.nz](https://retinayouth.org.nz)

### Support and Education for our Youth, their Families and their Friends Inc. (SEYFF)

Support and Education for our Youth, their Families and their Friends Inc., better known as SEYFF,

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is a blindness and vision-impaired consumer organisation. Formed in 2003, it is a support and education network for 17 to 30 year-olds. It aims to build friendships between vision-impaired peers and help families understand the emotions and feelings experienced by family members.

021 0235 4395

seyffnz@gmail.com

### The Albinism Trust

Albinism NZ is a national voluntary peer support group with an interest in full participation and equal opportunity for people with Albinism. It provides information, support and advice to individuals with Albinism their families and friends plus Medical, Educational, Employment and Academic interests.

(06) 367 5900

albinism@inspire.net.nz

[albinism.org.nz](https://albinism.org.nz)

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These details are correct at the time of printing however we encourage you to check our website for updated details at <https://blindlowvision.org.nz> or call our Contact Centre on 0800 24 33 33.

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# Contact us

Blind Low Vision NZ

Formerly Blind Foundation

National support office

Awhina House, 4 Maunsell Road,

Parnell, Auckland 1052

Private Bag 99941,

Newmarket, Auckland 1149

0800 24 33 33

info@blindlowvision.org.nz

[facebook.com/BlindLowVisionNZ](https://facebook.com/BlindLowVisionNZ)

[blindlowvision.org.nz](https://blindlowvision.org.nz)

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This information is also available in other accessible formats, including braille.

End of Seeing you through. Welcome to Blind Low Vision NZ.