



Children and Young People's Services

Supporting Brothers and Sisters (Siblings) of Children/Young People with a Vision Impairment

It is important that the siblings of child/young person with vision impairment have the opportunity to express their feelings, ask questions, and have an equal share in their parents' time wherever possible.

When caring for a child/young person with vision impairment, it may sometimes happen that, through no fault of their own, a parent/guardian may find the majority of their time taken up by the needs of that child/young person. In such circumstances, making small changes to accommodate the needs of siblings, can be highly effective, in allowing them to feel involved in what is happening within the family, providing them with an opportunity to express their feelings and give them the reassurance that they are loved. An example of such a change might be, making time to help an older sibling with homework, or making time to have a chat about their day, when the younger child/young person with vision impairment has gone to bed.

When the sibling of a child/young person with vision impairment spends time helping with, or doing things for, their brother or sister, they are acting as a young carer for that child/young person. When this is the case, Social Services should offer an assessment to evaluate the needs of the sibling who is providing care. This assessment is designed to support the child/young person, who is acting as a carer and can be used, to put in place strategies and offer other types of support to them, by looking at different aspects of their life, such as education, recreation, and future plans. The assessment can be carried out independently, or as part of the review of the cared for person. If you have already had an assessment and your circumstances change, a follow-up assessment can be carried out. You can refer to our information "Tips for Parents on Getting the Best Out of Social Services" for more information on how to request an assessment and what is involved in the process.



Throughout their lives, siblings are likely to pass through a number of different emotional stages, which may include: feeling upset, feeling confused, feeling guilty, and feeling embarrassed. Such emotional responses are normal and at such times, it is important for them to be given both space and support, to help them to express and deal with their feelings. Ways in which this support might be offered could be to speak with a child/young person's school to make them aware of the situation, or to speak with one of our Specialist Family Support Officers, who will be able to suggest and talk through other strategies which may be of help.

It is also important, wherever possible, to ensure that your child/young person feels able and happy to speak with you about issues which may be of concern to them. For example, if the child/young person with vision impairment experiences a change in their condition, their siblings might have questions about the effect this will have.

If brothers and sisters of a child/young person with vision impairment, are required to undergo testing themselves because it is thought that their brother or sister's condition may be genetic, (something which could affect both of them), it should be explained to them, what is happening and why, wherever possible, to avoid creating a mystery which may appear frightening to a child. For advice on how to address their concerns, please see our information "Answering your Child/Young Person's Questions" or speak with one of our Specialist Family Support Officers.

For further support contact:

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