

Mobility and Independence

Entitlement for children and young people with visual impairment

Are you making the changes?



Definition of mobility in education

Through specifically tailored Mobility and Independence (M&I) training programmes, children and young people (C&YP) who are visually impaired gain the confidence and skills needed to explore their environment. Through this exploration they have access to a wide range of learning opportunities both within and outside the classroom.

Mobility and Independence specialists work alongside teachers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and other key staff to ensure that standards of physical mobility and spatial awareness are equivalent to those demonstrated by sighted children of a similar age.

Mobility training is personalised, following a comprehensive assessment of need, and focuses on key areas such as sensory awareness, motor skills and other aspects of general development. The overall aim of every Mobility and Independence training programme is to enable children and young people who have a visual impairment to experience the highest degree of autonomy, self efficacy, dignity, and solidarity with their peers.

A recent survey of Mobility Specialists (October 2005) revealed how effective mobility and independence programmes can be in helping blind and partially sighted children and young people meet each of the 5 outcomes of Every Child Matters

Every Child Matters

Stay safe

Catherine is 14 and has no sight. She attends her local grammar school. Has mobility training improved your independence?

“ Yes, definitely. Without it I would really be lost here – it’s such a huge site! Now I am confident making my way round and am happier being independent. ”



Be healthy

Karen is 15 and registered blind and deaf. She travels independently in her home locality. Mobility training has improved her awareness of traffic and her safety.

“ I learnt safer ways to exercise and I can now cross roads without being in any danger. ”

Enjoy and achieve

Abbie is 8 and has no sight. She has mobility sessions at her mainstream school and is starting to learn to use a long cane. She has already set her own target. What would you like to learn next?

“ To go round to my friends house without anyone coming with me. ”



Enjoy economic wellbeing

Daniel is 15 and registered blind. His mainstream school arranged mobility training to help him travel on the train to get to his two-week work experience.

“ My mobility officer showed me how to use public transport and also how to get to the offices. Mobility training has improved my independence. ”

Make a positive contribution

Lena works for her local council as well as being a mother of two young children. Lena attended her local secondary school and received weekly mobility lessons. The education service provided these sessions with a mobility teacher who was experienced and qualified to work with children and young people.

“ I felt that it was important that I had good mobility skills before starting work which was a scary enough thought without adding the worry of mobility. ”



Things to do

- ✓ Who is now responsible for funding the provision for M&I for C&YP in your authority?
- ✓ Who is delivering this service and are they appropriately qualified?
- ✓ How has your authority audited the level of need for M&I for C&YP?
- ✓ How have young people and their families been involved in deciding about M&I services?
- ✓ If your authority has mobility specialists working with C&YP, which of the following do they provide?
 - Mobility training in home and neighbourhood
 - Independence skills
 - Mobility training in school
 - Skills to increase self-esteem
 - Traffic awareness training
 - Independent travel

Mobility and independence training is the entitlement of every child and young person with a visual impairment.

What is your plan of action?

Contact details

RNIB Helpline

RNIB's Helpline (**0845 766 9999**) offers an immediate, expert and confidential service.

MISE

Mobility and Independence Specialists in Education (MISE) is a nationwide group of professionals who work with C&YP with a visual impairment. They meet regularly and have done some research into M&I service provision. They hold a database of current workers. For information contact **Joyce Allinson**, Chair on **020 8788 0107**



Matthew aged 6

“ My mobility officer takes me to the shops. I know where I am by the smell. She helps me get round school safely. ”

