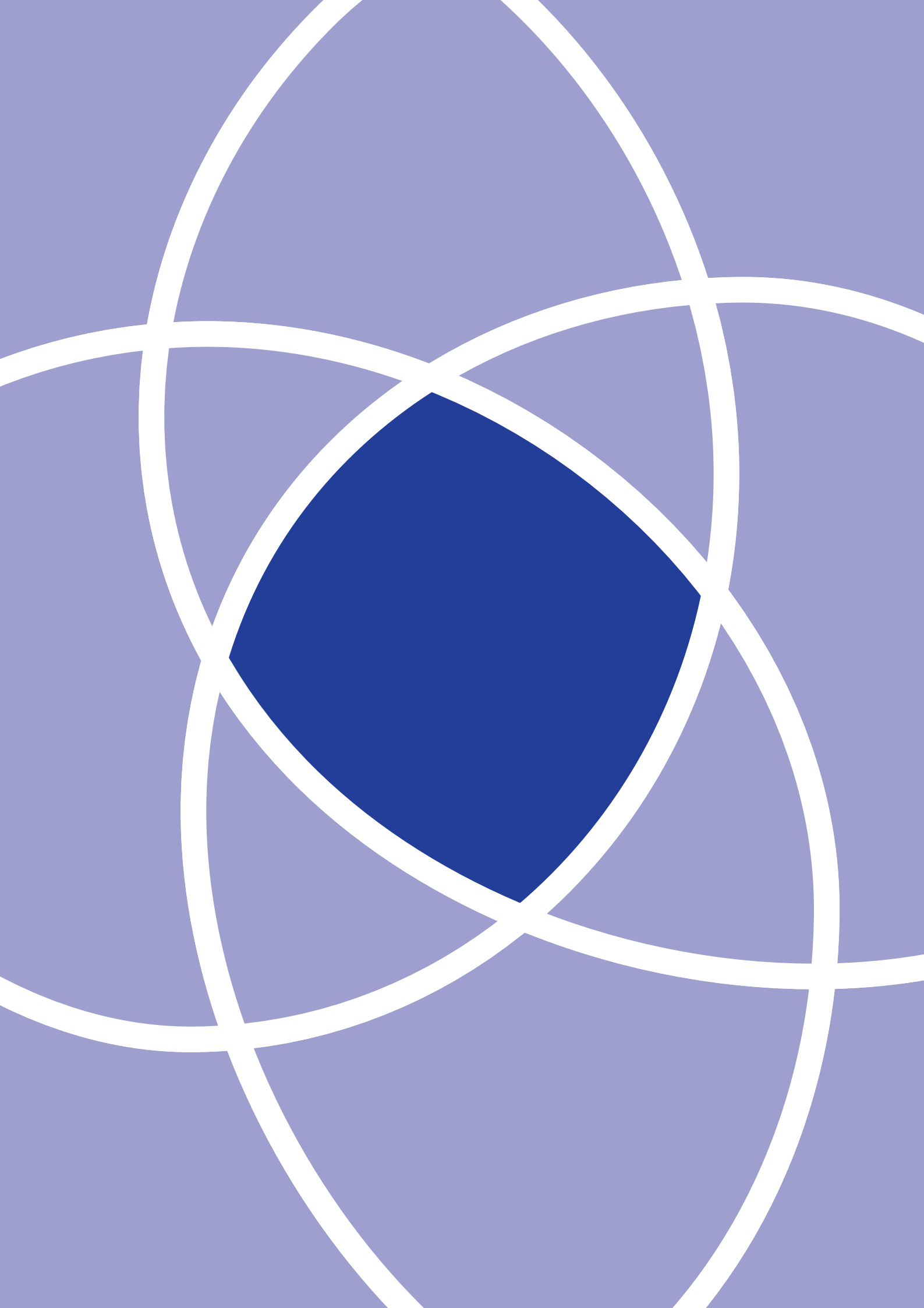


Early Support

Helping every child succeed

Introduction







Introduction

This booklet is published as part of the Early Support *Developmental journal for babies and children with visual impairment*.

The *Developmental journal* is for babies and young children with visual impairment, which is called *limited vision* throughout these materials.

Limited vision can range from profound impairment where a child has no vision or only light perception to severe where a child has some vision for 'form', or solid objects.

The *Journal* is designed to be used alongside the *Early Support Information for parents booklet on Visual impairment*, which provides general information and advice. It can also be used with other Early Support materials. Find out more about this at the back of the booklet.

Where words appear in blue, *like this*, they appear in the *Glossary*.

Where colour is used to identify different aspects of development, the colour coding follows that used by the *Development journal*.

Parents say:

'It helped us understand what to expect and how to plan for the months ahead. As a distillation of good practice, the Developmental journal provides us with experience on tap whenever we need it.'

'The Activity cards are particularly useful and can be copied and shared with grandparents, other people involved like health visitors and therapists, and child minders so every one is doing the same thing.'

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What is it?

The *Developmental journal for babies and children with visual impairment* is for parents, for children and for professionals who work with young children. It's a tool to help families track and understand development in their child and it supports partnership working – in particular, the sharing of information between families and the professionals they meet.

It provides standard material to:

- record children's development over time
- celebrate achievement as children move on and learn to do new things
- help families understand what they can do to help their child make progress
- promote the use of vision
- improve everyone's understanding of the developmental processes involved.

The *Developmental journal*:

- tracks development and progress from birth to about three years of age in children, where a visual difficulty or impairment has been identified
- tracks development and progress in vision, however it is developing
- provides a record for families of their child's achievements, progress and development
- gives a sense of growth and progression
- makes it easier for families to share information about their child with the professionals they meet
- helps to identify areas of difficulty early where more help would be useful
- helps professionals target the provision of additional services by tailoring them to a child's individual progress and learning style.

The [Activity cards](#) supporting the [Developmental journal](#):

- provide practical ideas about how to help a child move on to the next stage of development
- provide practical ideas to encourage and promote a child's vision as early as possible.

Some families like to add photographs and information about family events and holidays to the file to make it more personal and informal. That's fine – it's important to understand that the materials are flexible enough to be used in a number of different ways.

Who is it for?

The materials are designed to be held and used by families, in recognition of the essential role parents play in the life of young children. Parents support the gradual transformation of children from highly dependent babies into young individuals with particular personalities, likes and dislikes and real curiosity about the world. They're also the people who know their child best and the ones who naturally support their child's move on to the next stage of development, through everyday family events, social experiences and play.

However, sometimes the presence of a visual problem makes parents less confident about their ability to help their child learn new things and less confident about doing what they would normally do with young children. Research and experience both indicate that parents are the most significant supporters of a child with limited vision and that what they do contributes greatly to a child's achievement. It's therefore very important that parents don't underestimate their own knowledge and abilities, or the importance of the everyday things they naturally do to support their child's development.

This [Developmental journal](#) and the [Activity cards](#) can help with this, as they show parents how 'natural' ways of behaving at home gives babies and young children many opportunities to learn.



Read more about this in **Working together to support development in children**

The *Journal* provides a basis for discussion and sharing of ideas between professionals and families about what a child is doing, what they'll do next and the sorts of things everyone can do to help. The materials 'come alive' when they're shared and discussed by families with the professionals who work with them. Talking about them is at least as important as filling in the bits of paper, because it builds greater understanding about what a child is doing and about how best to promote development. Everything in the file therefore supports and underpins the vital work that specialist support workers (usually specialist teachers for visual impairment) undertake with families in the early years of a child's life.

What parents say they want to know

Parents of babies with limited vision say they want:

- an early diagnosis
- support and help to know how to interact with their baby
- support and help to assist their child learn and reach their full potential.

Where parents know their child has a visual impairment, they ask the following questions about areas of development that might be affected:

- How is my child doing?
- How can I help my child's vision improve or use the vision they have as well as possible?
- Is my child making enough progress?
- How do I know?
- What will he or she do next?
- What can we do to make this happen?

If you're a parent, the [Journal](#) is designed to help you to:

- share your observations of your baby or child and their behaviour and communication in everyday situations
- recognise the importance of what you do with your child in encouraging development
- ask questions and seek reassurance about your child's progress
- be clear about what everyone is expecting your child to do next
- understand what you and others can do to help your child learn – including to develop any vision that's available.

If you're a professional, it's designed to help you to:

- provide a consistent way of tracking progress that covers all the areas of development that need to be tracked – including vision
- identify any areas which might need to be followed up further
- suggest practical ideas for activities to promote development and vision at appropriate times
- work in partnership with families and other professionals as you establish a relationship with families and give advice.



Standard materials

A single, standard [Developmental journal](#) used in different places can help to ensure that:

- everyone working with a family ‘talks the same language’
- professionals working in different situations use similar yardsticks and have access to the same sort of information
- every family has a detailed record of their child’s progress over time, showing their strengths and current abilities
- discussion about a child is consistently supported – for example, as different nursery and school placements are considered. The information in the [Developmental journal](#) can help early years providers and schools meeting a child for the first time to understand their needs and it can inform decisions about how much additional support a child needs to ensure progress continues and that they’re fully included on the setting.

Standard materials also help families when there is change – for example, when they move house from one area to another or when a key professional in their lives moves on. The [Journal](#) can be used as a means to build understanding of a child’s abilities and needs when families meet professionals for the first time or begin to use new services. It can also be used in combination with other [Early Support](#) materials, where this is appropriate, to ensure families get the information and support they need, as quickly and smoothly as possible.

At the moment, there is no national screening programme to support the early identification of limited vision in babies. The [Developmental journal](#) therefore also has a part to play in raising awareness of the critical role that vision plays in early childhood development and in encouraging earlier diagnosis of visual disorder, so that babies and families get the help they need as soon as possible.

Read more about other **Early Support materials** at the back of this booklet

Finding your way around the materials

Component parts

The **Developmental journal** is made up of the following parts:

- Introduction
- Developmental journal
- Activity cards
- General overview of development
- Record of developing vision
- Developing vision activity cards
- Visual environment and visual materials cards
- Getting Stuck?

Developmental profile

The **Developmental profile** at the front of the **Journal** helps you to see the total picture of your child's progress and how it changes across all areas of development, as time goes by.

Developmental journal

The **Developmental journal** helps you track and record development in your baby or young child over time. It's presented as a series of tables, describing five **areas of development**, which are broken down into **stages** and **developmental goals**.

Each **stage** of development is presented as a separate booklet, so you can take it out of the file and carry it with you to meetings with professionals if you wish to do so.

Summary sheets are available online but are not included in the file.

These help you to look at your child's development across all areas in discussion with your professional advisor and can be downloaded from www.earlysupport.org.uk



Activity cards

Each area of development at each stage has accompanying Activity cards that make practical suggestions about how you can help your child move on to the next developmental step.

When using these cards, it's important to refer across to the Visual environment and visual materials cards. They help you to use the most appropriate visual materials to help your child develop. Each card carries a prompt to help you remember to do this.

General overview of development

This booklet explains the principles of development in babies and young children with limited vision and how important it is to actively support the development of vision. The key areas of development in the Developmental journal are set out, with short explanations about the themes in each area. Strategies to support learning and ideas about toy materials are included.

Record of developing vision

This booklet helps you record how your child's functional vision is progressing. It tracks the development of visual acuity (sharpness of vision) and control of eye movements. The sequence of this material does not parallel the stages of general development, as the level of vision differs in degree from baby to baby.

Developing vision activity cards

These cards accompany the Record of developing vision. They encourage vision and make practical suggestions for how you might promote your child's visual development as quickly as possible, to ensure their full potential for vision is achieved.

Visual environment and visual materials cards

There is a prompt on every Activity card, to remind you to use these cards to guide your choice of toys and objects to suit your child's current vision and needs.

Getting Stuck?

As the name suggests, this booklet is there to help if you feel that your child has got a bit 'stuck' and not much progress is being made in a particular area. There are suggestions for practical things you can do, listed under headings that refer to behaviours and aspects of development that sometimes cause difficulty for young children with limited vision. The booklet also suggests where you can get more specialist help, if you need it.

How the material is organised

Areas of development

The *Developmental journal* is divided into five areas of development:

- Social and emotional development
- Communication, language and meaning
- Play and learning
- Movement and mobility
- Towards independent self-care

These areas are colour coded throughout the *Developmental journal* materials.

The *Activity cards* are designed to be used alongside each developmental area and have been colour coded accordingly.

Each *developmental area* is sub-divided into *themes* that highlight important developmental processes at particular stages and *goals*, that further development in that broad area. For example, the developmental area of *Communication, language and meaning* is divided at Stage 1b into the themes of *Listening and attending*, *Understanding language and meaning*, *Communication* and *Expressive language*. Many of the same themes reappear at a number of different stages, showing how developmental processes continue through a child's early years.

Themes are broken down into *developmental goals*, which are the goals that are typically achieved at that stage. The linked *Activity cards* help you help your child to achieve these goals.



It's a good idea to work across [all](#) the developmental areas of the [Developmental journal](#) at each stage of development because development is really a single process and each [area of development](#) affects other areas.

However, there are times when it may be more convenient or worthwhile to focus on one area at a time, especially if that area seems to need more attention than others.

Stages of development

Read more about this in [General age guide](#)

The [Developmental journal](#) and associated [Activity cards](#) are presented as [stages](#). [Stages](#) represent a grouping together of the skills and behaviours that can normally be expected to emerge at a roughly similar developmental age. This concept of 'stage' is not the same as that used by some groups (for example, developmental scientists) but one that makes it easier for parents to track development in their child.

Although we are still learning about the order in which children with limited vision acquire new skills, the order used in the [Developmental journal](#) is roughly that which can be expected for a 'typically developing', or steadily advancing child with limited vision – within the limits of current knowledge.

How to use it

The [Developmental journal](#) is an organised, structured tool, which can be used in a number of different ways to celebrate and record progress and encourage development in your child.

It invites you to watch what your child is doing and use the tables to record when you see them doing something described on the page. When you've been using the material for some time, this helps you recognise and record new things that your child is doing for the first time, as they move on and develop. As time goes by, this builds into a positive, cumulative picture of achievement. The material is designed to help you understand more about the way your child learns and their pattern of development.

You may decide to:

- fill in the [Journal](#) on your own and then review the material with the professionals who work with you
- ask your professional to fill in the [Journal](#) with you on an ongoing basis
- discuss what you have observed with a professional using the [Journal](#) but not actually fill in the tables
- ask someone who works with you and your child to keep a record of your child's progress using the [Journal](#) on your behalf if you don't want to do it yourself, but are interested in the information the material could provide.

There's no 'right' way to use the material to record what your child is doing – it's there for you to use in whatever way you find most useful. Do whatever helps you to observe your child and respond to their particular ways of learning and whatever helps you understand their skills and interests best. You may want to discuss this with the professionals who work with you, so you can use the material together in the way that suits you best.

It's a good idea to move through the [Developmental journal](#) roughly in the sequence that it's printed, although some children jump certain steps or acquire skills in a slightly different order.

How to record change and progress

There's a table on each page of the [Developmental journal](#). The material in the table is organised by [developmental area](#), [themes](#), and [developmental goals](#).

Example 1 (facing page)

In this example, [Understanding language and meaning](#) is the [developmental area](#), [Linking sounds/actions/words to familiar situations](#) is the [developmental theme](#) and 'Showing excitement or [anticipation](#) when hearing a familiar phrase before a regular routine' is the [developmental goal](#).

Example 1



Communication, language and meaning continued

Every day family and cultural routines and games are repeated. These allow your child to hear lots of familiar language many times over and this supports their emerging understanding.

Children are beginning to link familiar phrases with activities – for example, 'Bathtime', 'Bedtime', 'going to the swings'. They're also beginning to understand other familiar words like 'No!', their name and other simple phrases that they hear every day like 'Clap your hands', 'Up you get', 'Sit down'. Children usually understand simple phrases before they can say them.

Developmental journal · Stage 2

Children at this stage are also beginning to learn about familiar objects and what they're used for (their function and purpose). Playing with everyday objects supports this learning. Later they must learn that there is a name or word label for each object. Children with vision hear you name an object as they look at it. Children with limited vision need to be touching and exploring or using the object when they hear its name being used in order to make the connection.

For activities and ideas, see Cards 5 and 6

Understanding language and meaning

Developmental goal	Card	Possibly	Definitely	What my child does and enjoys
Linking sounds/actions/words to familiar situations				
Showing understanding of link between objects and familiar routines, eg bib or spoon for mealtime, flannel or duck for bath time	5			
Showing excitement or anticipation when hearing a familiar phrase before a regular routine eg 'bathtime', 'go to swings', 'go in the car'	5/6			
Understanding what objects are for				
Making attempts to use objects on self but may not hold them correctly, yet eg brush on hair, spoon to feed, telephone to ear	5			
Playing with everyday objects showing how it's used eg taking empty cup to mouth	6			

When your child begins to do something new, it can be recorded as:

Possibly (column 3)

Record behaviour here that you are seeing for the first time or that you have only seen once or twice. Use it for recording progress when your child is just beginning to achieve a new skill but is not yet confidently using it.

Definitely (column 4)

Record behaviour here that you've seen your child do quite often in familiar situations. This tells you that the behaviour or skill has definitely been learnt and is now established.

It's helpful to write the age and/or date when your child shows a **possible** behaviour because it tells you that they're learning a new skill and may need help with it. It's also helpful to write the age and/or date when your child shows a **definite** behaviour, as over time, this builds into a record to show and celebrate all the new skills that your child is learning and how long it has taken to consolidate new learning.

What my child does and enjoys (column 5)

Each child has their own way of doing things and this column encourages you to make what you record in the **Journal** personal. You might note down information here about how your child does different things, particular examples you have seen and what they like doing. This knowledge is useful to share with any professionals working with you.

As you fill in the **Developmental journal** over time, it shows your child's progress and achievements and builds into a unique record of your child's personality, likes and dislikes and interests.

To find out more about how to move on from recording progress to encouraging development in your child, read the section on **Activity cards**



Making a start – finding a baseline

If you are starting to use the [Developmental journal](#) when your child is more than a year old, it's important to find a starting level (a baseline), to help you find information that is relevant and useful. You do not have to fill out the [Journal](#) from the beginning.

Start by thinking about what your child is currently doing and all the different things that they've learnt over the last few months. This may include the way your child interacts with other people, feelings and interests, behaviour, the way they communicate and respond to you, what they like playing with, how they move around, and what they do when feeding, bathing or dressing. Think about how your child uses their hands, ears or eyes to find out about the world, as well.

Some parents find it particularly helpful to discuss this with a professional advisor and to share their observations.

Look through the [Developmental journal](#) (starting with the earlier stages) until you find some things that you know your child is definitely doing. If your child seems to be doing everything in a particular stage, move onto the next stage until you find a page where your child has definitely got some, but not all of the skills described. If there are some sequences (in some [developmental themes](#)) that your child has not yet started with, maybe the previous stage for that theme would be more useful.

This is your baseline, where it's most useful to begin recording and looking for information about how to help your child in practical ways.

Remember to do this across all five different [developmental areas](#) because progress is often uneven – many children are further ahead in one area than another.

Find out more
about this in
Uneven progress

How often should I record what my child is doing?

Some parents say they prefer to fill in the [Developmental journal](#) by themselves or with their specialist advisor fairly regularly, so they don't forget the particular ways in which their child does things.

How often you find it helpful to do this will be affected by the age of your child, their rate of learning and what fits in with your family. If you prefer to use the materials with a professional who works with you, like a specialist teacher for visual impairment, the pattern of their visits may affect how often you record what's happening.

It's usually most useful to record what your child does at least once or twice during their current stage, if you want to use the [Journal](#) to guide you on what goals to aim for and what activities to use to support your child – not just to record what's happening.

A guide might be to fill in the [Journal](#) about once every two months in the first year of your child's life and three or four times a year from [Stage 2](#) onwards. Some parents may prefer to fill it in more often – for example, every couple of months.

Specialist teachers often say that they find it useful to review progress once a term, which is about once every three months, so this might provide a helpful routine.

If you use other [Early Support](#) materials, you might like to transfer the current [Journal](#) booklet into your [Family file](#), so you can share the information in it at appointments with any new people involved with your child. They also link into [Family service plans](#) – they support discussion and planning of what would be most helpful for your child and your family at this stage of your child's development.

Find out more about this at the end of the booklet



Moving on – using the Activity cards

The Activity cards

It's important to understand that recording what your child can do is only a first step towards helping them to move on and develop further.

The [Activity cards](#) provide suggestions and practical ideas to help you support your child to acquire new skills. They're designed to fit in with the [Developmental journal](#) and should be used together. Each developmental goal in the [Journal](#) is supported by corresponding ideas and activities on an Activity card. [Column 2 \(Card\)](#) gives you the card number for the [Activity card](#) that's most likely to be relevant.

Look at the example of a table from the [Development journal](#) on page 16.

You're looking for ideas to help you assist your baby to get to the stage of 'anticipating being lifted up'. Check Cards 3 and 4 and move on to Card 4, when you've done everything on Card 3. You need to find the same headings on the card as you see in the [Journal](#) – in this case, [Stage 1b](#), [Social and emotional development](#), [Developing relationships](#), [Learning about self and parent and others](#). The activities listed under this heading will help with the goals listed under the same heading in the [Journal](#). The card that's appropriate for this example is shown with the table overleaf.

There are two sets of cards for each developmental stage: Stage 1a (cards 1 and 2), Stage 1b (cards 3 and 4), Stage 2 (cards 5 and 6) and so on, except for Stage 5. Column 2 on the [Developmental journal](#) tells you whether to use the first or second card for each goal. Some goals have relevant activities on both cards – complete the first card before going on to the second one, which will be more advanced. Some cards suggest that you 'continue' to practise a particular activity to help strengthen the skill learning.

Example 2 Development journal table

Stage 1b Social and emotional development


Developmental goal	Card	Possibly	Definitely	What my child does and enjoys	
Developing relationships					
Learning about self and parent and others					
Responding to approach of parent eg showing excited body movements, lifting head	3				
Looking at and responding to parent's smile <i>Check Record of developing vision</i>	4				
Anticipating being lifted up	3/4				
Showing feelings					
Showing a greater range of feelings eg delight, distress, excitement	3/4				
Showing delight eg laughing and chuckling	3/4				

This column tells you which **Activity card** to use

Example 2 Linked Activity card

Developmental journal for babies and children with visual impairment

Stage 1b · Activity card



Card 3 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about self and parent/others

- Call your baby's name gently as you approach them and watch how they responds to your voice before you start to pick them up.
- Encourage your baby to look at your face (if sufficient vision).

Showing feelings

- Repeat actions and routines which your baby seems to especially enjoy and watch how they shows pleasure and delight.
- 'Mirror' your baby's emotional feeling and expression to show them you understand they are sad or happy. If they seem sad, make a sad voice and intonation and face and hold them soothingly; if they show excitement, make a happy excited voice and face and respond with excited movements.

Beginning to show attachment to parent and familiar others

- Encourage different family members to interact with your baby so that they comes to recognise different voices, handling and faces.
- If your baby smiles to your voice or touch or smile, give them a special kiss and cuddle.

Remember to look at the Visual environment and visual materials cards



Planning goals

Filling in the [Journal](#) helps you plan ahead, looking at what to expect your child to do next and thinking about what you can do to help. Some people like to do this by planning the next developmental goal their child is moving towards (ie what they're aiming at next) in quite a structured way. This is best done in conversation with the professionals who work with you. In general, if you like using the material in this way, it's a good idea to limit the number of goals you identify to say three or four, and to review progress regularly, before moving on to more.

Making activities personal

The cards outline potentially useful activities and strategies. They're also like a springboard, encouraging you to come up with your own ideas. You can make them personal, adapting them to reflect your own family style, culture and traditions and your child's personality and interests.

Select the cards that are appropriate for your child's current stage of development and use the cards that go with the goals that you have decided to concentrate on for the time being.

The cards are designed to be taken out of the file one by one and some parents like to put them somewhere they're easy to see, like on the fridge with a magnet, or on a notice board, or maybe near where you change your baby's nappy.

Your advisory teacher, other professionals, and other parents that you meet will be able to provide additional ideas for things to do, as well.

Moving on – readiness for learning

Children develop at different rates but there are times or stages when they're likely to be most ready to learn a particular skill. This is called 'readiness for learning'. It's best if your child has definitely achieved a goal before moving on to the next. It's important to build on success and mastery and not to move forward too quickly or in too big steps – your child may need time to consolidate an existing skill before they're ready to learn another one.

Although the [Developmental journal](#) presents a sequence of goals, the order of the goals is a [guide only](#) – individual children vary in the order they master them.

Once your child has learned a new skill, encourage using it regularly and in the appropriate settings. This helps strengthen it. See if they're starting to show some behaviours that are needed for learning the next goal or introduce activities to help encourage them.

A lot of skills are related to each other so it's a good idea to achieve the majority of goals in the current stage before moving onto the next stage.

Summary sheets

Summary sheets are not included in the file, but they can be downloaded from www.earlysupport.org.uk. They help you consider development in different areas side by side.



Using the Developmental profile

At the front of the *Developmental journal* is a single sheet, the *Developmental profile*. This provides a summary of all the developmental areas and all the stages of the *Journal* on one page to give an overall picture of progress.

It can become part of your *Family file*, if you use other Early Support materials and professionals may wish to take a copy.

Filling in the Developmental profile

The *Developmental profile* is probably best filled in whenever your child has completed one stage and is ready to go onto the next. Colour in or date a box (cell) when you have identified the *majority* of items (ie more than 80%) listed under *developmental goals* as being 'definitely' there.

Colour code (or date) your entries so that you can see how the pattern of development changes as time goes by.

In the example overleaf, green was completed in December 2004, red was entered in April 2005 and yellow was entered in October 2006. Only one section *Play and learning* has been filled in for the purpose of illustration.

Developmental profile

	Stage 1a	Stage 1b	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Social and emotional development						
Developing relationships						
Social interaction						
Communication, language and meaning						
Listening and attending						
Understanding language and meaning						
Communication						
Expressive language – talking						
Play and learning						
Making connections						
Using hands						
Movement and mobility						
Body awareness						
Exploring the environment						
Extending movement and co-ordination						
Towards independent self-care						
Feeding/eating						
Dressing and nappy changing						
Using the toilet						
Washing and bathing						
Bedtime routine and sleeping pattern						



Using the Record of developing vision

The [Record of developing vision](#) and associated [cards](#) are laid out in a similar style to the [Developmental journal](#) and [Activity cards](#).

The [Record of developing vision](#) follows stages in the development of functional vision from awareness of light to seeing fine detail in pictures and the development of a variety of eye movements. The [Developing vision activity cards](#) give ideas to encourage both of these aspects of your baby or child's vision development. An example of a page from the [Record of developing vision](#) is given overleaf.

[Steps](#) in the development of functional vision are listed in the left-hand column. You will find spaces in some sections to write a brief description of the object, toy or picture that your child can see or can [follow](#).

As in the [Developmental journal](#), the two middle columns are for you to record the date that you first or occasionally notice a particular visual behaviour, and a date when you are confident that you see it regularly.

The right-hand column gives you space to record the distance at which an object or toy was seen or [tracked](#) and, if appropriate, the speed of movement as slow, medium or fast.

We suggest that you fill in the [Record of developing vision](#) at regular intervals (4 to 6 weekly in the first year and perhaps 3 or 4 times a year after that), as this will help you and your professional advisors decide on activities to promote your baby's or child's vision and to choose the most appropriate visual materials to progress their general development.

Look through the [Record of developing vision](#), if possible with your specialist teacher, starting with Record 1 to see which section you think describes your baby or child's vision best. If your child is achieving some but not all items in the section (eg Record 2), this is the right starting point for them. If there are some items that your child has not yet started, maybe the previous section (eg Record 1) would be better.



Record 3

Record of developing vision

Control of **visual awareness**, **visual interest**, gaze and eye movement for 'people' and large **lures** gradually extends even further – up to six metres. Gaze shifting and following also expand. Tracking along the floor can be recorded once a baby can sit supported on the floor, both across the visual field and 'to and fro'. At the same time, **visual awareness** and **visual interest** for increasingly small items at tabletop distance (30 to 40cm) continue to progress. Once aware and interested in large **lures** (yourself or an object of 20 to 30cm) at two metres, babies begin to detect similar-size **lures** when popped out from behind a screen or armchair with a non-patterned cover placed at a one metre distance from them. Some children with limited vision

continue to improve more and faster in near than far distance. Children need to understand the names of family, friends, pets, everyday objects and toys before you can try to complete some of the sections below.

Whenever **lures** are not specified below, list and describe them (their size and colour and whether they are light reflecting (LR) or non-light reflecting (N-LR)) in the empty spaces provided in the left-hand column. Record the distance (from **lure** to baby/child) and/or speed (slow, medium, fast) in the right-hand column.

See Development of vision activity cards 3a and 3b

Steps in functional vision	Possibly	Definitely	Distance (cm) and speed of movement (slow, medium, fast)
Distance: from within 1/3 metre to 6 metres			
Visual awareness, visual interest and visual acuity			
Detects/looks at large lures (12cm or over) that 'move on the spot', eg you waving, a favourite cuddly toy (jiggled) or a dangling spinning ball			
Detects/looks at increasingly small single, stationary items on a well-contrasted table or highchair surface			
Detects a tennis ball size (6cm)			
Detects a wooden brick/cube (2.5cm)			



Using the Developing vision activity cards

The [Record of developing vision](#) is presented in four parts (Record 1, Record 2, Record 3 and Record 4). The [Developing vision activity cards](#) are grouped and numbered 1–4 to correspond with these four parts. Every time you fill in the [Record of developing vision](#), use it to guide you on which [Developing vision activity card](#) to use to help you move your child's vision forward.

As you progress through the [Developing vision activity cards](#) you'll notice that some of the activities require a baby or child to have reached a certain level of development in [Play and learning](#), [Communication, language and meaning](#) or [Movement and mobility](#) before they can be used. Don't try to record these visual stages until your baby or child has acquired the other developmental skills needed.

Using the Visual environment and visual materials cards

The [Visual environment and visual materials cards](#) give you advice on the toys and materials to use to help your child and to promote vision.

Functional vision is described using four levels (V1, V2, V3 and V4) and the cards are organised to support learning and development at each of these levels.

Use Record 1 and Record 2 of the [Record of developing vision](#) with your specialist teacher to ascertain your child's starting visual level and then change the [Visual environment and visual materials card](#) you are using as your child progresses from one visual level to the next.

On every [Activity card](#) associated with the [Developmental journal](#) there is a reminder to refer to the [Visual environment and visual materials cards](#) when planning an activity to help your child's development and promote vision.



General age guide

The [Developmental journal](#) is deliberately presented as a sequence of developmental stages that are not linked to age. However, expected age norms can be identified for each [stage](#) and a rough guide to the ages at which skills and goals might be achieved by a typically developing or 'average' child with limited vision, is given below.

It is to be expected that an 'average' baby and young child with limited vision will learn new things and acquire skills at a slower rate than a fully-sighted child of the same age. However, parents and professionals sometimes want to know how their child's development compares with what fully sighted children are doing – for example, it can increase understanding of how their child is developing and how this fits in with brothers and sisters or friends.

The age norms associated with the stages in the [Developmental journal](#) set out here have been presented as overlapping, to take into account children who make faster progress and those who develop more slowly. For example, in Stage 1b, some children move on to Stage 2 at about eight months, whereas others won't be ready until about 11 months of age or later.

Children with the most limited vision generally develop more slowly, reflecting the extra time they need to learn about their world. The rate at which some children develop is also influenced by other factors, like an additional sensory impairment or learning difficulty. It should be emphasised therefore that these age guides are **approximate guidelines only**. Professionals may wish to be aware they are not standard age norms (which are sometimes used in professional assessment tools).

Every child develops at a different rate and learns things in a slightly different way. Some are quicker in one area of development than another. What matters is whether a child is moving forward and on all fronts.

Read more about general development in young children with limited vision in the [General overview of development booklet](#)

Stage	Approximate age guide (limited vision)	Approximate age guide (fully sighted)
Stage 1a	0 to 6 months	0 to 4 months
Stage 1b	4 to 12 months	4 to 7 months
Stage 2	8 to 18 months	7 to 12 months
Stage 3	15 to 24 months	12 to 17 months
Stage 4	21 to 30 months	17 to 22 months
Stage 5	27 to 36 months	22 to 30 months

Uneven progress

All children develop at different rates and most will show areas of relative strength and weakness at any one moment in time. Some children, for example, learn to walk quite quickly but are much slower in learning to talk. Some start learning to talk, but are not yet walking independently.

This variation between different areas of development is particularly marked in babies and young children with limited vision. Sometimes other factors will be affecting the rate of development in particular areas, such as a motor or other sensory or learning difficulty.

This sometimes means that your child may be ready to move forward to a next stage in one area of development, but not in others.

Obviously if your child is ready to move forward in one area they should be helped to strengthen this area of ability. At the same time, you will want to support learning and give more help to those areas which are coming along more slowly.

If you find that your child is having difficulty in moving forward in one or more developmental areas or themes, the [Getting Stuck?](#) booklet may give you further ideas and suggestions. Talk through any concerns you have with your professional advisors.



Working together to support development in children

Early help for babies with visual impairment

A health-education partnership is needed to ensure that all aspects of a baby and young child's early progress and learning are adequately supported. Help for children with visual impairment should be available locally immediately after visual impairment is identified. Health and education work closely together to provide help through local educational authority sensory impairment services and ophthalmology/eye clinics and community paediatric services. More specialist advice is available from regional and national health centres.

Promoting vision

Babies and young children with very limited vision may not achieve their visual potential because their vision is too blurred to give them meaningful information. It is therefore desirable that babies and young children with limited vision are helped to develop and achieve their full potential for vision as early as possible so that they can gain maximum developmental benefit from vision. The Developmental Vision Team at Great Ormond Street Hospital has shown that the programme to promote vision development is successful in most of the conditions that lead to visual impairment.¹ This help should start as early as possible and continue through the early years.

The [Developmental journal](#) includes the developmental sequence of visual development and ideas developed by Dr Patricia Sonksen to help young children develop and use their vision to its full potential, presented here as the [Record of developing vision](#).

To find out more about this see the [General overview of development booklet](#)

¹ Sonksen P M, Petrie A and Drew K J *Promotion of visual development of severely visually impaired babies: evaluation of a developmentally based programme*. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology* **33**: 320–335 (1991)

Joint use of the Journal

Parents 'hold' the [Developmental journal](#) and it should be used in whatever way suits a family best. It can be used without any professional support or input, but this is not ideal. It's best used in partnership with professional advisors, particularly key professionals that families meet regularly – for example, specialist teachers for the visually impaired.

Joint discussion of the material by families and professionals is really helpful. It allows professionals to share their impression of a child's progress with full-time carers and gives specialist teachers for the visually impaired the opportunity to explain the significance of some of the behaviours that are listed. Filling in the [Journal](#) together and discussing it aids joint planning. We hope it will help professionals to make their expertise in helping children with limited vision, and their suggestions and advice, available to families, at the same time as helping families to share everything they know about their child.

The purpose of the [Journal](#) is to complement other professional tools. Professionals should be aware that the [Journal](#) is not a standardised assessment tool with standard age norms and therefore not designed to replace other professional materials of this type.

Moving on into Early Years settings

The [Developmental journal](#) is intended to support parents over their child's first three years of life. During this time parents are their child's first carer and educator and a large proportion of learning and development takes place at home. By the age of three, the majority of children will be attending or will be preparing to start pre-school, playgroups and nurseries etc. For many children there will be some aspects of the [Journal](#) that still need to be filled in as they enter nursery school and we recommend that parents take the material with them to discuss in Early Years settings, as decisions are being made about educational placements and about the additional support a child may need to thrive.



Children with additional difficulties – including older children

The [Developmental journal](#) can be used with children who are developing more slowly and/or have additional motor, sensory and learning difficulties. It may continue to be of value to the families of these children for several years until their child reaches the end of the material.

However, the [Journal](#) may need some adaptation to the needs of individual children and this is best done with the help of professional advisors that work with a child and family. The following general guidance points are all important when the material is being used with children who are developing more slowly and/or have additional motor, sensory and learning difficulties:

- Rate of learning will be very individual. It may take longer to achieve each stage of development and the general age guidelines in this booklet are likely to be less helpful or relevant than for other children.
- Suggested goals and activities may need to be broken down into smaller, structured steps to ensure children make steady progress.
- There may be greater variation in what can be achieved and when. For example, if a child has a motor difficulty, the goals for movement and mobility may need to be adapted with the help of specialist advice from professional advisors. The order in which goals can be achieved may also differ sometimes from that listed for other children.
- Some suggested goals and activities will need to be modified to suit the learning style and abilities of particular children – for example, if a child also has a hearing impairment.

Please remember that if your child has any physical or medical difficulties in addition to a visual impairment, it is vital to consult other relevant professionals who may be working with your child before carrying out activities suggested on the [Activity cards](#) – for example, your paediatrician, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, mobility officer etc.

How the material was developed

The [Developmental journal](#) has been created through a unique partnership of parents and health and education professionals working together to ensure that it meets families' needs.

After the Early Support [Monitoring protocol for deaf babies and children](#) was published in 2004, parents of children with limited vision requested a similar set of materials. An integrated health/education approach was needed to design and deliver materials to meet the needs of children with severe visual impairment because of their specific developmental and visual patterns and needs.

The Developmental Vision Team from Great Ormond Street Hospital was invited to lead the development team, which included senior members from paediatrics and psychology and a senior specialist advisory teacher for children with visual impairment. The development process was supported by an advisory committee made up of national representatives for health, education and the voluntary sector, with specialist knowledge of visual impairment and early education.

The [Journal](#) was developed over a two-year period, beginning with a review of materials currently in use in the UK and elsewhere. The Development team reviewed checklists and assessment procedures available nationally and internationally and sought the views of services for children with visual impairment, as well as families, as to their usefulness. The team worked closely with families and professionals to seek their views as to what was needed and what was already in use.



It became clear that there were very few useful procedures available that were readily available to families **and** to those who work with families. Those materials that were available lacked detail on developmental growth in the first two years of life and did not take into account recent research or clinical experience of the most significant developmental processes for babies and young children with visual impairment.

Parents and professionals worked closely with the Development team in giving their views of what worked best. Over 40 families were involved in three parent focus groups to discuss the material and four additional national consultation events involving parents were held where draft materials were discussed and reviewed. Draft materials were piloted and refined over the period of a year through home visiting and use with individual families and with parents at hospital clinic visits. Consultations were made with a range of professionals at three focus groups involving specialist teachers for visual impairment and four national consultation events involving teachers and parents. Every stage of consultation influenced the design and content of the materials.

The final version of the [Developmental journal](#) draws on the scientific research, existing developmental tools and clinical experience of the Developmental Vision Team from Great Ormond Street Hospital, insights from other researchers and clinicians, and in particular, feedback from parents and professionals.

Further reading

Show me what my friends can see: a developmental guide for parents of babies with severely impaired sight and their professional advisors

P Sonksen and B Stiff

Institute of Child Health, London (1999)

Let's eat: feeding a child with a visual impairment

J Brody and L Webber

Blind Childrens Center, Los Angeles (1994)

Get a wiggle on

R Drouillard, S Raynor, Rev. A Story, Ed. L Alonso

The Blind Children's Fund Publications

Michigan State University, USA (1997)

Get a move on

R Drouillard and S Raynor

The Blind Children's Fund Publications

Michigan State University, USA (1996)

Little steps to learning: play in the home for children who are blind or visually impaired 0-3 years

I Haughton and S Mackevicius

Royal Victoria Institute for the Blind, Melbourne, Australia (2004)

I'm posting the pebbles: active learning through play for children who are blind or visually impaired

I Haughton and S Mackevicius

Royal Victoria Institute for the Blind, Melbourne, Australia (2001)

Talk to me: a language guide for parents of blind children

L Kekelis and N Chernus-Mansfield

Blind Children's Center, Los Angeles, California, USA (1984)



Look at it this way: toys and activities for children with a visual impairment

R Lear and Butterworth-Heinemann
Elsevier Science Ltd (2003)

Dancing cheek to cheek: nurturing beginning social, play and language interactions

L Meyers and P Lansky
Blind Childrens Center, Los Angeles, California, USA

Learning to play: common concerns for the visually impaired preschool child

S Recchia
Blind Childrens Center, Los Angeles, California, USA (1987)

Play it my way: learning through play with your visually impaired child
Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) (2001)

Reaching, crawling, walking.... let's get moving

S Simmons and S O'Mara Maida
Blind Childrens Center, Los Angeles (1992)

Acknowledgements

The *Developmental journal* was devised in consultation with families of babies and young children with limited vision and the professionals who work with them from across England. Thanks are due to the many people who commented on the materials while they were in development – what they said has been essential to improving the *Journal* and making it fit for purpose.

Particular thanks to Hertfordshire Specialist Advisory Service for seconding Jackie Osborne and supporting the piloting of this material with families in their area and to the Advisory Committee and past and present colleagues of the Developmental Vision Team at Great Ormond Street Hospital/Institute of Child Health.

Development team

Alison Salt	Joint Project Lead
Naomi Dale	Joint Project Lead
Jackie Osborne	Education Advisor
Valerie Tadic	Psychology Researcher and Administrator for the Development Team
Patricia Sonksen	Consultant to project and lead on visual materials

Alison Salt and **Naomi Dale** are Consultant Neurodevelopmental Paediatrician and Consultant Clinical Psychologist respectively and Joint Leads of the Developmental Vision Team, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust. They are Honorary Lecturers at the Institute of Child Health, University College London.

Jackie Osborne is a Specialist Advisory Teacher for the Visually Impaired and Co-Manager of the Visual Impairment Team of the Specialist Advisory Service to Children, Schools and Families in Hertfordshire.



Patricia Sonksen, former Director of the Developmental Vision Team and Senior Lecturer and Consultant Neurodevelopmental Paediatrician acted as consultant to the Development team. She is responsible for the [Record of developing vision](#) and associated [Developing vision activity cards](#) published here as part of the [Developmental journal](#).

Advisory Committee

Eileen Boothroyd	Education Officer SENSE
Sue Buckley	Director for Research and Training, The Down Syndrome Educational Trust and Emeritus Professor of Developmental Disability, Department of Psychology, University of Portsmouth
Christine Ennals	Family support specialist and specialist advisory teacher for the visually impaired Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Trust
Julie Jennings	National Development Officer: Early Years Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)
Sue Lewis	Director of Educational Development and Inclusion, Mary Hare, Newbury, and lead for the development of the Early Support Monitoring protocol for deaf babies and children in 2003/4
Diana Wingfield	Head of Visual Impairment Services, Essex

Developmental Vision Team at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) and the Institute of Child Health

The Developmental Vision Team at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) has been developing materials, guidance and service delivery for babies and infants with visual loss since 1970. The team is multidisciplinary, with staff from neurodevelopmental paediatrics, psychology, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and optometry. The Developmental Vision Clinic provides specialist assessment and management of the development and vision of children with severe and profound visual loss.

For over thirty years the Developmental Vision Team has carried out clinical work and research in designing, developing and evaluating tools and programmes to promote early development and vision for babies and young children with limited vision, with their families. For example, the Reynell Zinkin Developmental Scales, developed by previous members of the team under the direction of Joan Reynell (1970 to 1978), are one of the only semi-standardised assessment tools for babies and preschool children with visual loss in the world. Under the direction of Dr Patricia Sonksen (1978 to 2001) the team developed and evaluated an integrated scheme of assessment and management for a wide range of areas of development including visual development and functional vision. A practical book of developmental and visual guidance for parents and professional advisors was first published by Sonksen and Stiff in 1991 and is now available in five languages. It is used nationally and internationally. Tests of functional vision have been developed to measure progress in the development of vision and eye movements and to explore the baby and young child's vision for the everyday environment and for visual materials.

Great Ormond Street 
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Early Support

Early Support is the central government mechanism for achieving better co-ordinated, family-focused services for young disabled children and their families across England. It is developing at a time of significant change, as part of the restructuring of children's services in response to *Every Child Matters* and alongside new integrated assessment, information and inspection frameworks for children's services.

Early Support builds on good practice. It facilitates the achievement of objectives set by broader initiatives to integrate services, in partnership with families who use services and the many agencies that provide services for young children.

To find out more about the Early Support programme, visit www.earlysupport.org.uk

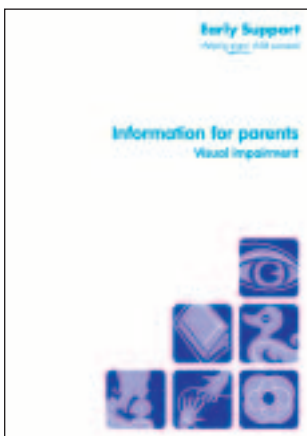
The Early Support Information for parents booklet on *Visual impairment* offers general information about visual impairment and advice for families with children under the age of five.

The Early Support *Family pack* contains a *Family file* to help families keep track of multiple contacts and co-ordinate support for their child where a number of different agencies are involved.

If you would like a copy of these publications, which are available free of charge, please ring 0845 602 2260 and ask for the following:

Information for parents booklet on *Visual impairment* Ref: ESPP8

Early Support *Family pack* Ref: ESPP1





This booklet is published as part of the *Developmental journal for babies and children with visual impairment*. Copies of the Journal can be obtained from:

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