



*Ask yourself how, with little or no sight, you would: read your letters and bank statements, get money out of a cash machine, cook a curry for your family, play bingo or cross the road?"*

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## What do rehab workers do?

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### Dear RWPN Friends,

#### What do Rehab Workers do?

Going blind is frequently rated as the health condition that people fear above all others. The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) say that this fear becomes a reality for 100 new people every day.

So when you see a person striding down the street sweeping their white cane in front of them we need to consider what it has taken for them to achieve this apparent level of confidence. It may well be that that person has a great deal of inner resilience, is good at learning new skills and has a supportive family. But they probably didn't get to this point alone and it probably took quite some time.

#### They will probably have had input from a **Rehabilitation Worker for Visually Impaired People.**

Ask yourself how, with little or no sight, you would: read your letters and bank statements, get money out of a cash machine, cook a curry for your family, play bingo, cross the road and catch a bus to the shops, tell a tin of soup apart from a tin of dog food,

Now ask yourself how you would feel if you were faced with doing these things when you feel so low you don't even feel like getting out of bed. Nobody should face the trauma of sight loss without the help of a professional. That is why Social Services and voluntary organisations employ Rehabilitation Workers.

It's quite a job. Rehabilitation Workers need to understand how someone in this position feels, they need to know the practical solutions to these problems and prioritise the solutions. They need to identify the significant risks involved in some of these activities, but convince the client they are risks worth taking and then they need to teach these skills in a way that motivates. It takes time.

Furthermore, blind and partially sighted people do not live in a vacuum of good health. Vision loss is a significant predictor for depression and anxiety, as well as a major predictor of falls. A significant side-effect of Alzheimer's is disruption to perception and spatial awareness. 60% of strokes cause vision prob-

lems and blindness is a significant risk for people with long-term diabetes. 40% of people with a learning disability also have sight or hearing loss. So we need to think on our feet and adapt off-the-peg solutions even when some of the clients we work with don't have the language to express what might help them.

**Rehabilitation Workers can and do change lives of adults and children with sight problems.**

How many people in your area would benefit from the services of one? How many Rehabilitation Workers are there in your local council?

Please do get in touch if we can help with more information or put you in contact with Rehab Services for the Visually Impaired in your area.

*Simon*

Simon Labbett, Chair, RWPN Committee

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