

Professionals involved with your child

Paediatrician - The paediatrician is a specialist in child health who will check the overall health of all newly born babies, and is usually based at the hospital or child development centre

Orthoptist – An Orthoptist is a valuable member of the ophthalmology team and works closely with ophthalmologists, optometrists, ophthalmic nurses, vision scientists and medical imaging. An orthoptist has the skills to assess vision in children of all ages, even those who are non-verbal. We may use lots of unusual equipment that allow us to assess different aspects of your child's vision such as visual acuity, contrast sensitivity, colour vision and peripheral vision.

Optometrist – For children, the optometrist's role is a varied one. Firstly, optometrists are responsible for refraction. This means that they perform a test to see if the child needs to wear spectacles. This test can be done from any age and should be repeated annually until the child is 16 years old. Optometrists are also qualified to provide contact lenses in certain cases where required. The optometrist will choose appropriate lenses and assess the vision and the fit of the lenses. They will then monitor the health of the front of the eyes at least annually to ensure that the contact lenses are not causing any damage to the eye health. In children with low vision, optometrists in the hospital play a role in assessment of these children. They also provide practical advice and low vision aids where appropriate to help the child to function as normally as possible at school and at home.

Ophthalmologist – An ophthalmologist is a medically trained doctor who commonly acts as both physician and surgeon. (S)he examines, diagnoses and treats diseases and injuries in and around the eye.

Audiologist – An audiologist is a specialist in evaluating and managing hearing loss. They have the skills to assess hearing in children of all ages and can provide different devices and techniques to help a child hear and communicate.

Genetic Counsellor – Genetic counselling is a service that provides support, information and advice about genetic conditions. It's conducted by healthcare professionals who've received training in the science of human genetics (a genetic counsellor or a clinical geneticist). What happens during genetic counselling will depend on exactly why you've been referred. It may involve; learning about a health condition that runs in your family; how it's inherited, and which family members may be affected; an assessment of the risk of you and your partner passing an inherited condition on to your child; a look at the medical history of your family or your partner's family and drawing up a family tree; support and advice if you have a child affected by an inherited condition and you want to have another child. It may also include a discussion about genetic tests, which can be arranged if appropriate, including the risks, benefits and limitations of genetic testing, helping to understand the results of genetic tests and what they mean.

Speech and Language Therapist - Speech and language therapists work with children with speech, language and communication difficulties and can also advise about strategies to support eating if that is an issue.

Physiotherapist - The physiotherapist uses exercises and special equipment to help your child develop physically.

Occupational Therapist - Occupational therapists work with children to develop their daily living activities such as washing, dressing etc. They can advise on what special equipment and adaptations your house needs in order to help your child become more independent

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) – An ECLO is a great point of contact to have in a hospital as they can provide emotional and practical support to individuals and families experiencing sight loss. Not every hospital is fortunate enough to have an ECLO so please check if the hospital you attend has this service.

Qualified Teacher of Visually Impaired (QTVI) - QTVIs carry out a central role in the education of children and young people with vision impairment from birth, working in homes, early years settings, schools and post 16 settings

Mobility Officer - Some services for children who have visual impairment also have a mobility officer, sometimes called an Habilitation officer. They will be able to advise you on how to encourage your child to move around more independently and develop everyday living skills.

Educational Psychologist - Educational psychologists work with children who are having learning, behavioural or emotional difficulties. They will talk to your child and assess him as he plays in order to develop strategies to meet his educational needs.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) - A SENCO is the staff member in a school who co-ordinates all the special educational needs provision. In smaller schools, the headteacher or deputy head might be the SENCO. SENCOs are responsible for education psychology, behaviour support and assessment of special educational needs.

Learning Support Assistant (LSA) or Teaching Assistant (TA) - A Learning Support Assistant or Teaching Assistant works alongside teachers in early years settings. They support individual children or small groups to help them learn effectively.