



BIOS | BRITISH AND IRISH
ORTHOPTIC SOCIETY

BIOS Low Vision Core skills and Competencies Guidance

October 2021. Review date October 2023

This document was developed by Martin Rhodes and Charlotte Codina in conjunction with the Low Vision Clinical Activity Steering Group and is intended to inform specialist Low Vision clinical practice by Orthoptists

Core skill 1: Case history taking

Competence	Learning outcome
Skilled in taking a thorough case history, pertinent to a patient with low vision	Able to conduct an appropriate case history, using relevant language and pertinent questions.
Able to identify areas of visual challenge for the patient	Understand realistic goals and visual function in daily life with the use of visual aids.
Interpretation of documentation, clinical notes and electronic records	Understand the importance of accessing and interpreting relevant patient records as part of a clinical assessment

Core skill 2: Vision assessment

Competence	Learning outcome
Assess near visual acuity	Demonstrate competence in selecting the appropriate test for the patient and be able to adapt this where necessary. Able to record results accurately.
Assess distance visual acuity where possible	Demonstrate competence in selecting the appropriate test for the patient and be able to adapt this where necessary. Able to record results accurately.
Assess functional vision	Able to define functional vision and discuss the methods of assessment, assimilating information as to how the patient copes in daily life.

Core skill 3: Contrast and lighting

Competence	Learning outcome
Knowledge of eye conditions which affect contrast	Able to describe eye conditions which affect contrast
Assess contrast sensitivity	Demonstrate knowledge of assessing and recording contrast sensitivity using the different tests available.
Understand the optical principles of lighting, demonstrating knowledge of the ocular pathologies for which lighting may need to be adapted.	Able to suggest appropriate lighting solutions to include adjustments for glare and poor contrast.
Understand the implications of poor contrast sensitivity for the patient	Understand the methods of assessing functional vision, assimilating information as to how the patient copes in daily life

Core skill 4: Communication

Competence	Learning outcome
Uses appropriate language and communication to establish a good rapport	Able to adapt to the needs of the patient, to overcome barriers to communication
Uses patient appropriate questioning to assess visual function and areas of visual challenge, establishing patient's desired goals	Able to adapt questions to ensure understanding and to explore further, functional vision challenges mentioned by patient.
Gives the patient clear, accessible information about how to access a range of low vision services	Able to provide relevant information clearly and concisely, sign-posting to additional services where needed.
Communicates information about low vision aids and use of technology and what they are being used for	Able to explain the advantages and limitation of each visual aid and technology

Core skill 5: Knowledge of near vision aids and visual strategies

Competence	Learning outcome
Skilled in the assessment of near visual acuity with appropriate tests	Demonstrate proficiency in assessing and recording near visual acuity using appropriate tests
Uses knowledge to suggest appropriate near low vision aids to help the patient achieve their goals	Demonstrate good understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the available near low vision aids and able to instruct patients in how to use them, including hands free options
Assess for preferred retinal locus (PRL)	Outline the principles of eccentric fixation and instruct a patient in using their PLR
Teach Steady Eye Strategy (SES)	Demonstrate the teaching of steady eye strategy to a patient with central scotoma.
Applies analytical and problem-solving skills to select diagnostic and therapeutic interventions for the child and adult	Select appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic interventions

Core skill 6: Knowledge of distance vision aids

Competence	Learning outcome
Assess distance visual acuity with appropriate tests	Demonstrate knowledge of assessing and recording distance visual acuity using appropriate tests
Suggest appropriate distance low vision aids to help the patient achieve their goals	Demonstrate good understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the available distance low vision aids including both monocular and binoculars and be able to teach the patients how to use them, including localising and focusing
Applies analytical and problem-solving skills to select diagnostic and therapeutic interventions for the child and adult	Select appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic interventions

Core skill 7: Knowledge of the visual impairment care pathway

Competence	Learning outcome
Understand the significance of Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) and Referral of Visual Impairment (RVI) forms	Identify patients who may benefit from being registered as Sight Impaired (SI) or Severely Sight Impaired (SSI) and have a working knowledge of the pathway to get patients further support (including RVI)
Knowledge of the wider support network available for the patient	Be able to signpost patients to local and national services including the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO), appropriate charities and social care
Understands the national framework for low vision services	Able to explain the national framework for low vision services and identify the organisations working in all sectors to promote the interests of visually impaired people.
Understands current national policy relating to low vision service provision	Able to discuss the current national policy relating to low vision service provision
Works with local allied services in patients best interests	Collaborate and consult with local allied services to coordinate patient care

Core skill 8: Knowledge of technology

Competence	Learning outcome
General knowledge of the non-optical, electronic and emerging technologies available	Demonstrate understanding of how mobile phones, cameras, CCTV, tablets, e-readers and specialist low vision technologies can benefit patients
Knowledge of sources of further information on these technologies to which to sign-post patients to	Able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such technologies with patients and able direct patients to appropriate avenues, local services and companies for provision
Knowledge of artificial intelligence aids and how they may be of patient benefit	Able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such technologies with patients and able direct patients to appropriate avenues, local services and companies for provision

Core skill 9: Visual field loss

Competence	Learning outcome
Assess visual fields	Demonstrate competence in selecting an age and cognitively appropriate test for the patient and be able to adapt this where necessary. Able to record results accurately.
Interpret visual fields	Demonstrate competence in interpreting common visual field defects
Describe the effect of peripheral and central visual field loss	Able to describe to the patient the effect of their visual field loss
Know strategies and available visual aids to support patients with field loss	Able to instruct the patient in strategies for coping with visual field changes such as; vertical reading, line guides and the use of minifiers.
Understand how prisms may variously be used in peripheral field defects	Able to prescribe and fit prisms for patients appropriately and effectively

Core skill 10: Paediatric visual impairment

Competence	Learning outcome
Assess the vision of pre-literate and non-verbal children	Able to adapt to the needs of the patient, to overcome barriers to communication to assess and record visual acuity accurately.
Assess patients' needs and suggest suitable low vision aids	Able to demonstrate use of domes and magnifiers to practise navigation
Outline the main clinical conditions which result in visual impairment in children	Able to discuss in depth the main clinical conditions which result in visual impairment in children
Knowledge of local pathways to ensure a streamlined service for children with visual impairment	Able to direct children to and liaise with allied local services appropriately in the best interests of the child
Be aware of the complex needs of children with multiple disabilities	Understand the holistic approach of the multi-disciplinary team for a child with multiple disabilities and interact with other team members effectively
Issue low vision aids as appropriate to a paediatric population	Describe the principles of issuing low vision aids in children and provide appropriate therapeutic interventions