Eye Conditions
Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI)

What is CVI?

- It is a condition in which areas of the brain responsible for vision are damaged
- This can happen before or around the time of birth, or as a result of later injury or disease
- It causes visual problems even if the eyes are normal
- It often occurs along with other conditions such as cerebral palsy or hydrocephalus

What are the effects of CVI?

The following points describe key aspects of the condition but each child is different and there will always be exceptions. Children who have CVI:

- may seem to see very little and sometimes only familiar things
- have problems understanding what they see especially in pictures or photos
- do not always pay attention and will need extra time for looking
- look away or turn their head away from people and events
- find it hard to do several things at once
• tire very easily
• may not recognise objects in unusual surroundings
• have difficulty picking out single details in ‘busy’ backgrounds
• have better vision when an object is moving

What can be done to help?

• Make sure the child is positioned comfortably
• Look for toys or activities that motivate the child
• Give plenty of time to look at people and objects, pictures and photographs
• Show things frequently so they become familiar
• Make looking part of meaningful activities
• Use real objects, as opposed to toys, in play activities
• Use a quiet, distraction-free environment
• Present things to look at near to, not far away
• Use bold shapes and colours with good contrast
• Encourage learning using all the senses
• Use words or real objects to tell the child what is happening next

Useful contacts:

Cambridgeshire Sensory Support Team 0-25
Email: visual.impairment@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01480 373434
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/visionsupport

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
Tel: 0845 7669999
www.rnib.org.uk
www.cerebra.org.uk
www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/viscot/vipubs.html

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