

## **A day in the life of a Rehabilitation Officer Vision Impairment (ROVI) - Sensory Services**

Rehabilitation Officers for Vision Impairment (ROVI) work with people who are blind or partially sighted and are part of our Sensory Services team. A ROVI identifies the issues/problems that a person is having and puts in place professional rehabilitation interventions to help the person live as independently as possible with vision loss or dual sensory loss. They do this by enhancing the person's skills and self confidence, to help to make changes and adjustment in their daily routine, teach coping strategies and mechanisms to live life independently following sight loss.

They act as an advocate for people with sensory loss and promote accessible services, equality, social integration and understanding of the impact of sight loss/dual sensory loss.

ROVI's assess, plan, implement, evaluate and review rehabilitative services with the aim of reducing risk, maximising and maintaining independence, safety, dignity and choice. This includes daily living skills, mobility and community safety training, communication skills and low vision. For example, teaching people to use a long cane, re-learn routes to places they need to get to, including bus and train travel ensuring people can identify hazards such as the gap between train and platform. Equally ROVI's teach kitchen skills, chopping, cooking, as well as tasks such as washing up and keeping surfaces clean, ensuring they can identify hazards such as sell-by-dates, food that has gone off.

Visual impairment is a life changing experience and very often we will be working with people who are at a crisis point in their lives. We recently received a thank you letter from a service user who has very eloquently outlined a day in the life of a ROVI.

*"Dear Sandra*

*I contacted your department when I became severely visually impaired in October 2020. I spoke with your helpful staff even before they had received my Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) and felt very reassured.*

*I lost much of my sight following a delicate eye operation. It left me vulnerable and anxious, especially in relation to applying for PIP. Things started to turn around when I met Rebecca!*

*For a good deal of last year and for a couple of sessions in 2022, I had the privilege of Rebecca (A ROVI team member) being my support worker. Her knowledge, empathy, patience and communication skills belie her age. She began sessions with me at a time when I felt vulnerable and very alone (I am single and my closest family live thousands of miles away). Covid restricted what neighbours could do to help at that time. I really appreciated the trained help Rebecca offered, always with great professionalism and a big smile!*

*Rebecca did a thorough initial assessment, followed by a couple of sessions to identify potential adaptations to various living areas (e.g. lighting). Equipment was quickly installed through your partner services and really made a difference.*

*I had a very unpleasant incident with my local train station staff who refused to help me fill in a disability travel card application, which I couldn't see properly. As Rebecca was coming round later the same day, she accompanied me to the station and we both tried to clarify my Visual Impairment. Due to hostility Rebecca agreed to speak with a senior official at the station once I had reported the incident to senior management. Without her support, the abuse I received from these two members of staff would have made me lose confidence once more. Rebecca offered training and support to the rail company which was declined. As it was, for months I had avoided using the main entrance to the station.*

*Rebecca also helped me complete various forms like the taxi card form and gave some helpful tips on Personal Independent Payment (PIP), which were reiterated by RNIB. She gave me thorough training on white cane use, including walking to my local supermarket, getting on and off buses, trains etc. She even stayed on after work on two occasions, so I could have a go with her at walking in the dark. I can now do shopping and use local transport on my own and I am confident enough to organise assisted travel when going further afield.*

*All in all, Rebecca really helped me, and I am grateful to your department for not rushing any of the training. I know from my RNIB support group that many have far less support from their Councils and even here, Rebecca drew my attention to their statutory rights! and I am pleased that having fed back to them, they are now once more on waiting lists for more white cane training.*

*In conclusion, a huge thank you to all of you and especially to Rebecca, who helped me so, so much!"*

Best wishes

Miss K