



**Royal Society for Blind Children**

# Understanding your baby's visual skills

You may have concerns about your baby's vision, be going through the diagnosis process or have recently received a diagnosis of vision impairment. When this is happening it is not unusual to feel unsure about your baby's vision, what their diagnosis means and how their visual skills affect the way they play, interact, and develop.

When you get a diagnosis, you may get allocated a Qualified Teacher for Vision Impairment (QTVI). If you have a QTVI they will work with you to help you understand your baby's vision.

You may not have a QTVI, this may be because your baby is diagnosed but doesn't meet the criteria for one (if you are unsure contact your local sensory services via your local council website), or it may be because you have only recently identified concerns or because you are currently awaiting diagnosis.

We know that every baby is unique and that you are the expert on your baby and their vision, but we also understand you might feel unsure when it comes to observing, interpreting, and understanding your baby's vision.

Here are a few of our suggestions to help you understand your baby's vision:

- Keep a record of what you observe. You can use this to support you on your journey to diagnosis, to help inform professionals, to learn what works and what doesn't, and to look back on in the future so you can see your baby's progress.
- Try not to compare, even to another baby with the same diagnosis. How your baby experiences their vision will be individual to them, even if they share some key features with others.
- Just like us, your baby will have good and bad days.
- Vision can fluctuate. This could be because of how your baby is feeling, or because of things that are happening around them.
- Observe your baby at different times of day and in different environments.

## What am I looking for?

- Watch how your baby holds things, do they bring toys close to their face, or do they hold things at a certain angle. These may look unnatural to us, and often our instinct is to correct them, but this is your baby finding a way to look and focus.
- Do they turn towards something visual – if you walk into or wave across the room but make no noise, do they look? How far away are you before they notice?
- What lighting does your baby need? You might notice your baby only opens their eyes properly in darker rooms. Your baby may turn away from the light, cover or poke at their eyes or become distressed when there is brighter light. Alternatively, you may notice that your baby only seems to see in brighter rooms.
- Does your baby see you if you are to the side of them? If they have peripheral vision loss (tunnel vision) they might only see things directly in front of them.
- Does it seem like your baby can see you or their toys, but they are not looking directly at you, they may have their head at an angle, or they could appear as if they are looking over your shoulder. If they have central vision loss could be using their peripheral vision to see you. If they have nystagmus, they could be using their null point. This is a position that best stabilises their eyes.

Our Families First team of family practitioners are here to support you through your child's early years and into the future.

## RSBC can help you with:

- practical advice about your child's development
- support when you feel overwhelmed.
- understanding your child's vision impairment better
- living as a family and being supportive of each other

Call 020 3198 0225 or email [connections@rsbc.org.uk](mailto:connections@rsbc.org.uk)

