

Top 10 tips for supporting residents with sight loss

The following tips were put together by Thomas Pocklington Trust, and first appeared in My Home Life, a bulletin for care home staff focusing on residents with sight loss. Visit www.myhomelife.org.uk for more information.

1. Learn to recognise sight loss: Sight impairment in older people is very common, but can be easily missed. Look out for signs, such as a change in personal appearance. Does a person have difficulty reading or recognising people? Have they stopped a hobby?
2. Find time to chat with residents: To understand how they're living with sight loss and how to help them make best use of the sight they still have.
3. Find out about the eye condition: Sight loss varies and affects people in different ways. Become familiar with the type of conditions affecting your residents and how they might be affected.
4. Promote good eye and spectacle care: Ensure glasses are clean, labelled with the purpose (e.g. reading) and the person's name. Make sure there is a spare pair available. Ensure residents have eye tests when they need them and at least once a year.
5. Ensure staff are communicating effectively with residents: Do residents always know that you have come into the room or left? Can they always read what has been written?
6. Maximise lighting: Recognise the importance of having good lighting, whether this is natural light, or a reading lamp. Make sure the lighting fits the purpose of the activity and is comfortable to use.

7. Consider the physical environment: Help familiarise residents with the layout of their bedroom and the home in general. Consider how your home might be improved with tactile and audio signage and colour contrasts to distinguish features of the environment.
8. Be alert to other conditions such as hearing loss or dementia: Sight loss can be compounded by other conditions such as hearing loss or dementia. Ensure you identify the appropriate health support to minimise the impact of these.
9. Involve the resident: Residents need to be supported to develop their own strategies for coping with sight loss. Ask residents what they would like to do and work with them to find practical solutions.
10. Keep reflecting on your practice! Make time to reflect upon your care practice and ask your residents for feedback on what works well and what could be improved.