

# HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

## A CHILDVISION GUIDE TO SERVICES



**ChildVision**

National Education Centre for Blind Children



"And now here is my secret, a very simple secret; it is only with the heart that one can see rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye."

**Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince**

# Welcome to ChildVision, the only place in Ireland dedicated to the education and therapy needs of blind and multidisabled children...

Guided by a spirit of what's possible, for over 150 years ChildVision have been helping children with sight loss and other profound disabilities to grow to their best and fullest potential. We look after children from all over Ireland ranging in age from birth to 23 years of age.

Staffed by a dedicated team of specialists, on our 7-acre campus in the heart of Drumcondra you will find the Preschool, Therapies & Nursing, Vocational Education, National Assessment Service, Low Vision Clinic, Eye Clinic, Library, Equine Therapy and Pet Farm, Swimming Pool, and a primary school, plus five residential houses in the community, all dedicated to giving vision impaired children and young people a bright future and a place of their own.

- **If you are a parent, family member, or guardian** and you have been told your child or young person has a visual impairment or might be blind, **this book is for you...**
- **If you are a friend to the work** and want to know more, **this book is for you...**
- **If you are a visiting teacher**, or special needs assistant and you want to help a child in your classroom who is blind or vision impaired, **this book is for you...**
- **If you are a therapist, GP, or in any way part of a primary care team** looking after a child who is blind or vision impaired and you need resources, **this book is for you...**

## WELCOME

# This book is for you

**START HERE ►**

This guide is designed to walk you through ChildVision's services. All you need to do is turn the pages. But if you need to find it fast...

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# The First Step:

## About visual impairment, disability, and diagnosis

People with sight loss are said to have a visual impairment, and it can happen at any age in life. But did you know there are many levels of sight loss and even blindness? It's true...

**Vision Impaired, or VI**, ranges from low vision to no vision at all, which we know as blindness. There are even different degrees of blindness. It's within this broad spectrum of sight loss that we work to make the most of what each child or young person possesses.

**Multiple-Disabilities and Vision Impaired, or MDVI**, refers to sight loss plus other disabilities, some of which may be profound. At ChildVision this can mean a child or young person who is vision impaired and also has other conditions such as autism, epilepsy, developmental delay, rare genetic disorders like Apert syndrome, diabetes, hydrocephalus, specialised feeding needs, or cerebral palsy.

## Diagnosis is the First Step to Take

Regardless of whether your vision impaired child or young person has other disabilities, there is much that can be done... **and you don't need a GP's referral to come to ChildVision.**

But your child does need that initial diagnosis from an ophthalmologist or optometrist of a visual impairment that cannot be corrected by glasses or lenses:

- **If you don't yet have a vision diagnosis for your child or young person**, start with your family GP or paediatrician.
- **If you've had a diagnosis**, ring us to schedule an assessment.
- **If you are unsure where to start**, and your child or young person is between the ages of 0 and 23, pick up the phone and call us:

**No matter the diagnosis for your child or young person, there is much that can be done. 01 837 3635 is the number to call.**



## From blindness and a grave outlook of quadriplegia to today – **MEET AOIBHINN**

### **They call Aoibhinn the Learning Girl**

And it is a far cry from the 'grave outlook of quadriplegia' that Aoibhinn had once been given... before she and her parents came to ChildVision.

### **Her dad, Simon, recalls the family's first visit as if it was yesterday –**

*"There was a little blonde girl out in the playground, and in that moment we saw a vision of Aoibhinn in the future. Running and playing. Tears of joy streamed down our faces as we realised that this could be our little girl. I don't know where we'd be without ChildVision."*

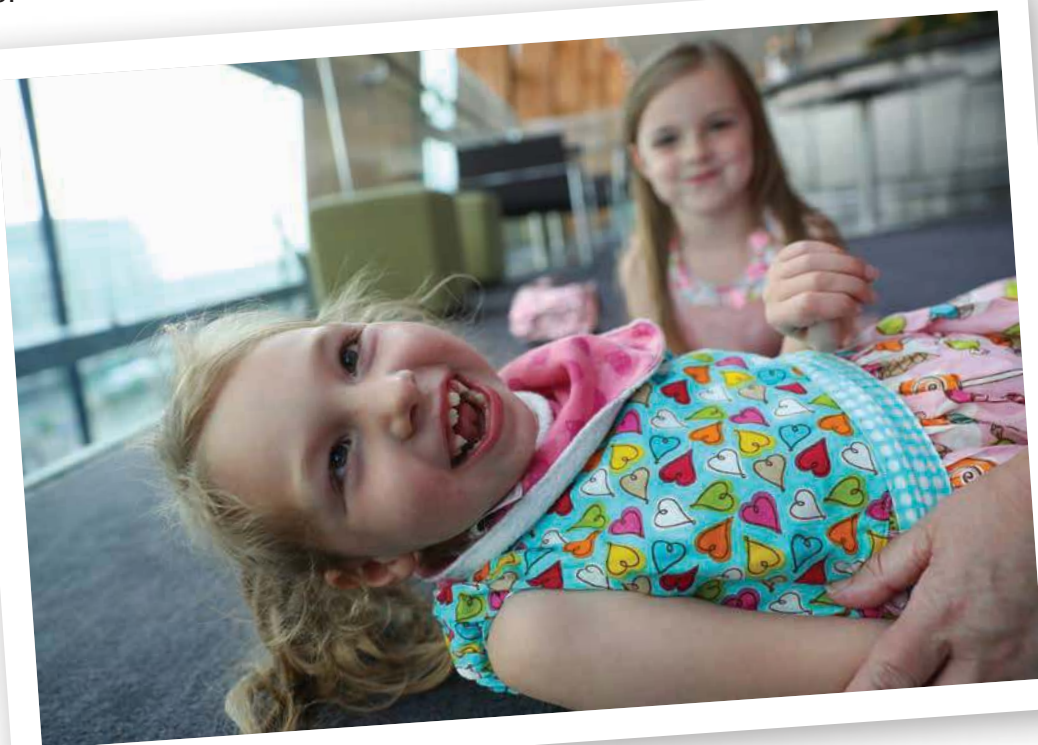
You'd see the spark in Aoibhinn yourself. Despite her rheumatoid arthritis. Despite her epilepsy. Despite her sight loss.

Music therapy helped Aoibhinn to find her voice through rhythm, and sound. Equine and mobility sessions increased her confidence and strength, and sparked dormant muscles and brain cells to life. And although she has limited sight, through assessment we learned that Aoibhinn can make out blacks and yellow.

Watch her sign the word "Friend." Hear her softly sing. See her climb steps that her family were told would be forever out of reach.

### **How far will the Learning Girl go?**

**A ChildVision assessment begins with revealing what's possible – for every child – and building, and growing, from there.**



# An Assessment for Your Child:

## Revealing the possible...

ChildVision looks after the vision assessment of all children and young people in Ireland aged 0-23. Our therapists, education specialists, and nurses will all meet with you and your child to discover what sight and other abilities he or she does have, and how we can help make the most of it. We will also refer you to all the help and resources available to you, both here at ChildVision and off-campus.

### Five kinds of assessment happen at ChildVision, each one vital:

**The Functional Vision Assessment** establishes the 'baseline' impact of a visual impairment on a child's day-to-day functioning, as well as what vision they do have and what they can do with that vision. Because visual impairments change over time, every child or young person at ChildVision receives a full functional vision assessment.

**The MDT, or Individualised Multidisciplinary Assessment,** happens when all the different teams at ChildVision come together over two days to meet with you and your child in one-hour time blocks. It includes physiotherapists, occupational, and speech and language therapists, assistive technology, mobility, life skills and nursing specialists. This assessment

is generally for children of primary school age and upwards.

**The Arena Assessment,** as its name suggests, is a concert style assessment with the entire team and is shorter by design than the MDT, generally for children aged 0-6 or for older children with very complex needs.

**The Review Residential Services Assessment** is an annual assessment for children and young people who attend primary or secondary education and are staying in ChildVision's residential houses for all or part of the week during the academic year.

**The ADOS2, or Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule,** is used to assess and distinguish Autism Spectrum Disorders across behaviours associated with blindness, called 'blindisms.' If your child or young person is vision impaired and has a diagnosis of autism, this can be one of the most important assessments you can schedule.

More than 400 children and young people with sight loss come to ChildVision with their families each year for assessments and a way forward. You can too.

It doesn't matter where in Ireland you are. **Just call us on 01 837 3635.**

**AFTER ASSESSMENT – A PLAN FOR EVERY CHILD ►**



"I am not afraid of  
storms for I am learning  
how to sail my ship."

**Louisa May Alcott**





# Why ChildVision Therapy?

## A plan for every child...

Up to 75% of everything a child learns is processed through vision.

So imagine not knowing where the walls of a room began or ended, or that there was a colourful toy within your reach, or how the unexpected slam of a door might sound when you can't even see the door or the person coming through it.

The world can be a scary place to a blind child.

Yet many children who come to ChildVision are more than 'just' blind.

For children and young people who struggle to see, speak, stretch, and swallow, it is vital they have an individual therapy plan for building on the skills they have – and for celebrating each success as it comes.

That's precisely what happens here, and you'd be amazed at the outcomes.

**The therapies and skill-builders you'll find on the pages that follow may not be familiar to you. But they are all at ChildVision** – and as part of every child or young person's individual therapy plan here, are the tools that will grow alongside your child to help them live the fullest, brightest, most amazing life they can.

# Physio, Occupational, and Speech & Language Therapy: Muscle magic...

Without intervention, not being able to see – or seeing poorly – makes a massive difference to how a child develops and in their ability to become independent.

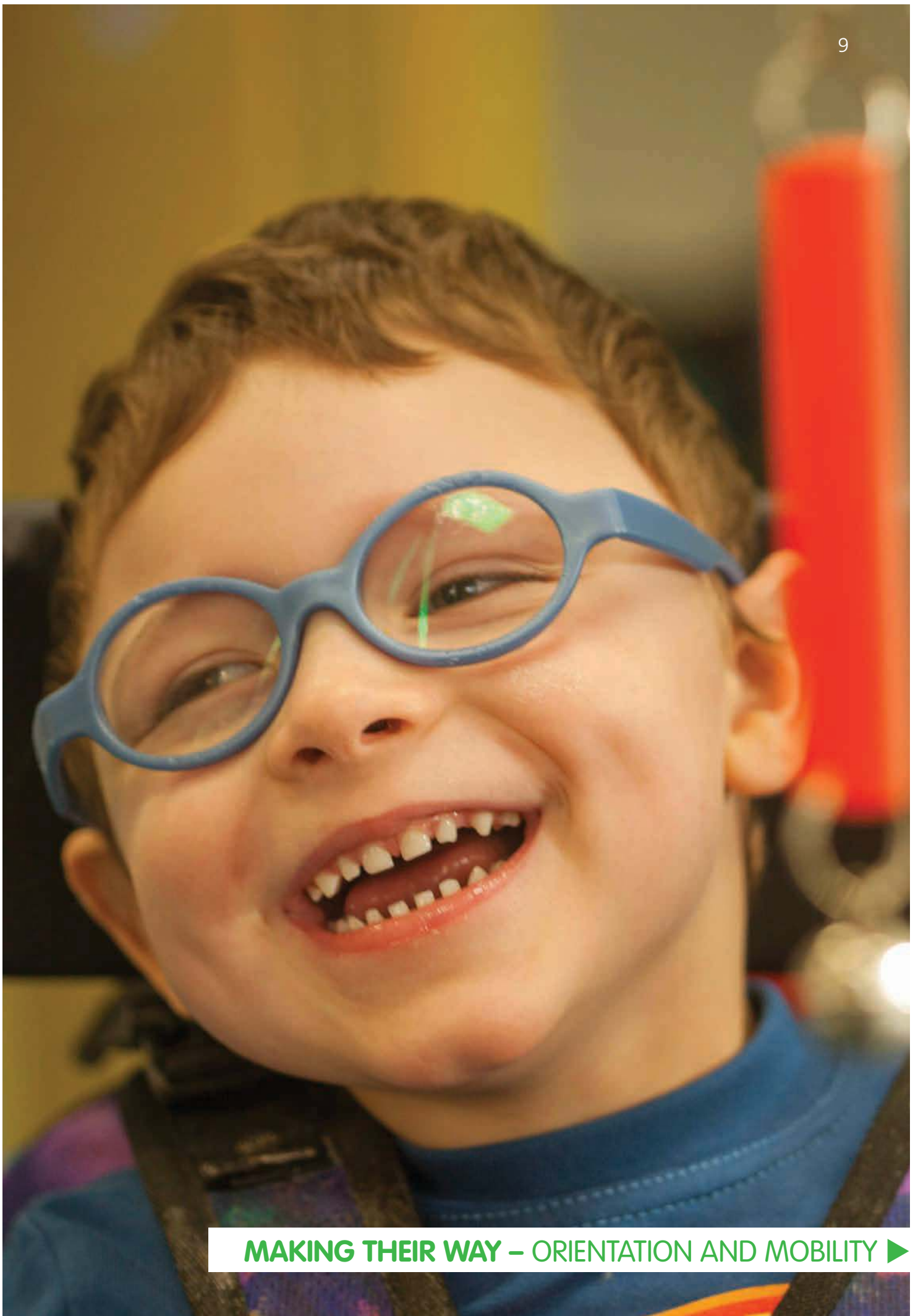
**At ChildVision the following therapies help to overcome that sight barrier:**

**Occupational Therapy, or OT**, is centred on helping each child or young person with day-to-day living. As such you'll often find our OT specialists working with children in the swimming pool or the ball pool, in the classrooms on campus, and in the equine centre. Whether it be buttoning a shirt, using the toilet, cooking a simple meal, or engaging with toys, Occupational Therapists help each child build basic yet vital skills that many of us take for granted.

**Physiotherapy, or PT**, is all about movement, posture, and coordination, because children with visual impairments often miss the milestones that many sighted children pass easily. Some of our children and young people also suffer muscle stiffness and joint pain due to other conditions. Using sensory-motor approaches, therapeutic equipment, and even the trampoline, it's the physiotherapist's role to help each child become as mobile and independent as possible.

**Speech and Language Therapy, or SLT**, revolves around communication. But it's more than that. For children with sight loss, it can be difficult to follow instructions at school and at home – or respond to social cues they can't see – and can extend to trouble with swallowing, or the textures of certain foods. Speech and Language Therapy sessions are specially designed to help with all of these things.





**MAKING THEIR WAY – ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY ►**





# Orientation and Mobility Training: Making their way in a sighted world...

What if tomorrow you were left on a footpath in your town and tasked with safely making your way home – only you couldn't see?

How would you orient yourself?  
How would you find your way back?  
How would you navigate things like intersections and public transportation?

Even for children who are still very small, think how brave you'd have to be to reach for something you couldn't see – or to crawl to your mum when you heard her voice.

This is what blind and vision impaired children and young people face every day.

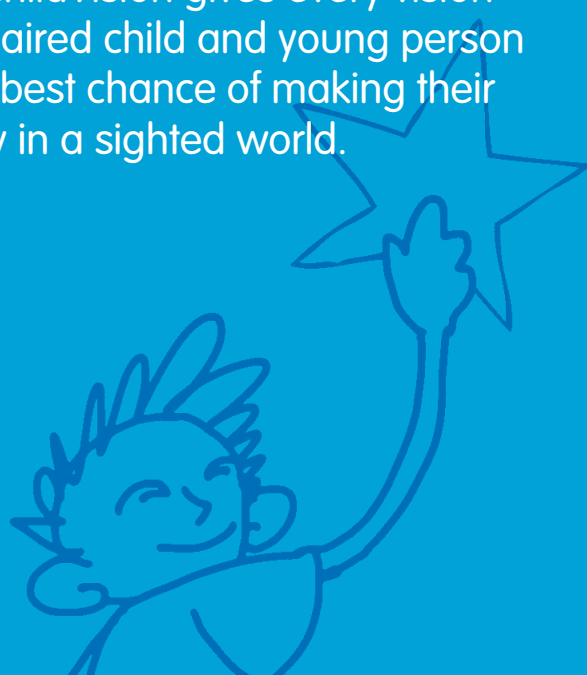
**Our orientation and mobility specialists help them to master the skills to safely travel and move as independently as possible:**

**Orientation training** teaches children and young people with sight loss to know where they are, physically, and where they want to go, and involves things like learning how to fully use their senses in any surrounding, developing memory and sense of direction, problem-solving,

and a heightened ability to interpret environmental clues.

**Mobility training** helps our students who are blind and have other disabilities to move, make their way, and play like other children as much as possible. This might involve mobility aids like long support canes, or from the earliest ages, encouraging a child to move their arms and legs, and safely explore the space around them. And as each child grows and changes, mobility training changes with them.

With or without the use of a cane, orientation and mobility training at ChildVision gives every vision impaired child and young person the best chance of making their way in a sighted world.





## A BOY AND HIS THERAPY HORSE...

# MEET NATHAN

Nathan has cerebral palsy and can only see bright lights.

So he never developed the muscles and the head control that sighted infants do as a natural response to the sights around them. Things only got worse when he tried to walk. Nathan's head would roll, causing him to fall again and again.

Before he came to us, Nathan was being fitted for a helmet to protect his head. The falls were hard on his body, but the thought of a helmet was hard on his spirit.

### **ChildVision's Equine Assisted Occupational Therapy (EAOT) changed all that.**

Nathan loved his time with the horses so much that his body got stronger almost without his knowing it – one of the many benefits to equine therapy for multidisabled blind children.



### **ChildVision's EAOT specialist explains why:**

*"Horses have a multidimensional movement in their pelvis that's really beneficial to the children when they ride. It helps them to build coordination, core strength, muscle tone, and sit upright. As well, we see huge improvements in the children overall. They're happier, they're more confident, and they communicate far better."*

Nathan was no exception. Before long, he sat tall and proud in his saddle! Best of all, today he walks around his home and school all by himself, and all thanks to equine assisted occupational therapy.



# Equine Assisted Occupational Therapy: Horse power's hidden wonders...

It's got a big name and a singular aim.

**Equine Assisted Occupational Therapy (EAOT) at ChildVision is the only programme of its kind in all of Ireland.** And it exists to transform the lives of multidisabled blind children by helping them learn to ride – and care for – some very special horses.

Research consistently recognises equine therapy as a tremendous benefit to children with disabilities such as **Down's syndrome** and **cerebral palsy**.

But guided by our equine therapists and certified riding instructors, **here on our Drumcondra campus**, the hidden wonders of horse power are even more profound.

ChildVision's Equine Therapy is showing massive promise in the treatment of **autism, sensory integration disorders, language development, developmental delay** and **trauma recovery**. So much so that our therapists have published and presented their work (see page 33), to help children around the world.

To the horses, blindness is not a barrier. Communication is not a barrier.

Each horse's sensitivity, gentle demeanour, and ability to read a child's body language **opens up windows like no other to independence, communication, bonds of trust and friendship and spatial awareness.**

ChildVision **students and non-students alike are able to use our EAOT**, both blind and sighted.

**Sessions take place on campus** and are 60-90 minutes long, with 30-45 minutes in the riding arena or our special sensory trails, and 30-45 minutes on the care and grooming of horses, to strengthen each child's bond with these very special animals.

**If you have a child or young person who you feel would benefit from equine therapy here, you are welcome to ring us for an assessment on 087 602 8880.**

# What are some of the things that our young people who are blind can learn to do – even when they have other, often profound, disabilities?

You'd be amazed...

- **Get ready for the day** (showering, haircare, and yes, even makeup)
- **Dress themselves** (match their clothes, lace their shoes, button buttons)
- **Prepare food** (pouring, cooking and measuring)
- **Follow a schedule** (read a clock, use an alarm clock)
- **Manage their own money** (note identification, banking, paying bills)
- **Keep their household in order** (cleaning, doing the laundry)
- **Use 'sighted' technology** (mobile phone, internet, email, social networks)

Whatever disability your child or young person may have, including sight loss and blindness, ChildVision specialists will work to make the most of what they can do.



# Independent Living and Technical Skills: Yes they can...

Zippering your jacket. Pouring a cup of tea. Tying your shoes. Matching your clothes. Using an alarm clock. Accessing your email or your mobile phone messages.

Independent living and technical skills are the things that most sighted people don't give a second thought to over the course of a day.

But to a child or young person with sight loss and other disabilities, these daily skills can seem forever out of reach – making them feel isolated, dependent, and small.

**ChildVision's Independent Living and Technical Skills help put confidence and control into their hands to give blind children greater choices throughout life.**

As with so much of what happens here, our staff specialists start with the abilities each child has, and build from there.

A student might begin with techniques for maximising their residual vision in one session, such as the use of lighting, colour, contrast, or size – and making the most of their senses of hearing, touch, taste, or smell.

Alternative systems such as braille labels to mark clothing, or liquid level indicators for tea and other aids are also explored, and always at a pace that grows alongside each child.

**Master everyday  
skills they never  
dreamed possible?  
YES, THEY CAN**

## HE DIDN'T WANT TO BE THE BOY THAT STOOD OUT MEET OISÍN

He is on five different eye drops daily.

A device called an ahmed valve helps control the painful pressure in his eyes that has been with him since birth. It is expected this will always be the case.

On paper, most people would assume that Oisín couldn't function visually at all.

Born with congenital glaucoma, he never wanted to be the boy that stood out. But Oisín didn't want to be left behind either.

After having his vision assessed and attending a summer camp at ChildVision, when September rolled around Oisín knew becoming a residential student here was the path for him.

*"He has so much help," says mum lona. "The support of the staff in the residential houses help him through the study."*

**Assistive technology helps a lot, including a laptop with zoomtext and white text on black that reads at triple the usual size, plus an iPad equipped with Daisy – the emerging world standard in digital talking books.**

His mum's face radiates with pride. *"Oisín wants to study politics or law, so that he can be a voice for the visually impaired. It's like he's holding my hand rather than me holding his."*





# Assistive Technology: Tools triumphant...

The hearing aids that help a relative to rejoin conversations. The remote control that brings your friend his favourite shows while he's on bed rest. The pencil grip that helps the little girl next door with her writing at school.

**Assistive technology is about bridging the gap** between what our bodies can do, and what we want or need to do.

It's about **giving us the same access as a fully abled person to all that the world has to offer**. It's about **helping us to live our lives**.

But for a child who is blind and may have profoundly daunting additional disabilities, **the right kind of assistive technology is a magic door**.

Suddenly they have a way to share their hopes and dreams... even if they can't clearly speak. They can read the same books as their friends... even if they can't see. They can use a laptop and carry a notebook and use the internet... even if their bodies don't work like yours or mine.

In Oisín's words (story at left), they are no longer the *"child who stands out."*

**Assistive Technology at ChildVision opens a magic door, however it needs to look, for each multidisabled blind child we help:**

- **Assessment:** to match the right devices with the right child or young person
- **Training:** to help them master each of the assistive devices they use
- **Outreach:** telephone support countrywide for school children and their families
- **Resources:** an amazing range of equipment for public use at our fully accessible library keeps the world at their fingertips, including braille displays, screen reading software, iPads, alternative screens, keyboards, mouse options, and switches.

To quote another blind student here named Paul, who now has a portable option for keeping all of his braille books in electronic notepad form, *"everything is on my Braille Note – I would be lost without it."*

**To learn about opening that magic door for a multidisabled blind child in your life, ring us.**

# My Life Teaching Blind Children

## Three questions with one of ChildVision's Early Years Teachers

### How do you make preschool fun for the littlest child who is blind and may have real trouble moving about due to other disabilities?

"We work hard to help the children to be as independent as possible in their play. If they need it, each will have a stander or a seat or a walker fitted to them. Even our switch-accessible toys bring stories to life through non-visual mediums. If story time is about a windy day, the children would have a fan they could turn off and on to feel the breeze on their faces."

### What is hardest for you?

"Getting a call from a new parent who has just been told their child is blind. I ask them to come in as soon as it suits so we can talk. The diagnoses are getting more complex, and I always try to see how we can help."

### What's the best part of your day?

"When I see the good things children do – like reaching out to touch something for the first time. It may not sound huge, but for these children, it is. And when we sing hello to each child at the start of the day. We always get big smiles."



# Education at ChildVision: Schools on campus...

From babies to young people up to 23 years of age, ChildVision opens up all of the doors to the world of learning for blind, vision impaired, and multidisabled children and young people all over Ireland:

## 0-6 Years

**ChildVision Early Years** – with locations both on our Drumcondra campus and in Cork, we will give your baby or child the chance to go to school, make friends, and celebrate achievements. Whether one day each week or all five, every child gets to work with our therapists, use the special Snoezelen sensory room, participate in equine and music therapy, swim in the pool, or just play. The preschools, and parent and toddler groups are inclusive and open to children with all abilities.

ChildVision has an Early Years centre in Cork for visually impaired and multi disabled children under the age of six. This service is for children from all over the Munster region.

For further information please ring  
021 481 0896 / 087 053 0455

## 6-17 Years

**A Primary School adjacent to ChildVision on campus** welcomes vision impaired (VI) students and vision impaired students with multiple disabilities (MDVI).

ChildVision also provides a **residential service for students who wish to attend Secondary Schools** close to campus that cater for VI and MDVI students (for details on our residential service, see page 23).

## 18-23 Years

Young people from all over Ireland between the ages of 18 and 23 who have sight loss and other disabilities can apply to our special **Vocational Education** programme here on campus, where they gain experience of the working world and skills for independent living. (For all the details, turn to page 21).

# Vocational students take a break to wave hello!

Some of their current activities, hopes, and dreams...

- Assistive Technology Teacher
- Horticulturist
- Blind Uilleann Piper
- Telephonist
- Actress
- Video blogger
- Animal Groomer
- Creative writer
- Disability advocate



"Why, sometimes I've believed in  
as many as six impossible things  
before breakfast."

**Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland**

# Vocational Education: On beyond secondary...

By definition, Vocational Education at ChildVision is a life skills programme.

But in reality, 'life skills' don't begin to describe what it's like to watch a young adult with blindness or significant sight loss – and very often other disabilities – to become confident in a sighted world.

Our Vocational Education programme runs **over one hundred and fifty group sessions and one to one sessions throughout the week, individualised to each student's needs**, choices, and abilities.

They learn about **advocacy and personal development**, improve **technical skills**, gain **work experience**, participate in **sport and music**, and **make new friends**.

Vocational students can also undertake a **QQI Certificate of General Learning** called 'Learning for Life,' this covers topics that range from Personal Decision Making to Listening and Speaking, with pending validation for modules on Horticulture, Numeracy, Drama and Relaxation Techniques, among others.

The Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) 'Towards Independence' curriculum is also offered, with past students choosing modules such as Creative Studies, Work Related Skills, and Communication.

Most vocational students are residential and so follow a 24-hour long programme.

**We welcome applications from students all over Ireland to ChildVision's Vocational Education.**

They simply need to be at least 18 years of age and have a visual impairment and additional disabilities to qualify for the 3-4 year long programme.





## ONE OF THE X-MEN, BRAVE AND TRUE...

# MEET JORDAN

*"When people ask me what's ChildVision like I say, 'It's like Charles Xavier's School for the Gifted from X-Men. It's really cool!'"*

A rare disorder called Bardet-Biedl Syndrome will one day steal the last of Jordan's eyesight, in addition to presenting him with other physical and mental challenges.

### **Is Jordan despondent? Not a chance.**

*"When I was in sixth class I visited for an assessment. But I wanted to stay home a bit longer with my family. Now, I'm ecstatic. Life is good and I'm going to my new house and my new school as a residential student at ChildVision."*

*The one thing that I would like to do is to walk on my own, but I'm patient when it comes to my impairment. ChildVision can make me what I want to be – independent."*



# Residential Programme: Stronger together...

We all value the ability to make our own choices and come to our own decisions.

But like everything important in life, personal independence doesn't just happen. Time and skill and caring need to be invested to make it happen.

**ChildVision's Residential Programme gives young people who are vision impaired a chance to live among their peers in a safe, supportive environment.**

**In Residential, students will:**

- **Stay in one of five, HIQA-registered and fully staffed houses** in the local community and within easy reach of ChildVision's campus and Dublin centre
- **Access 24-hour nursing support** as needed
- **Live with their 'house family'** from Sunday evening until Friday evening
- **Rely on support staff that are qualified social care professionals**, many who also work in areas specific to visual impairment
- **Practise and develop the skills for independence** to the best of their abilities

- **Take part in social and recreational activities** with their and other houses

We work closely with parents and guardians, families, and teachers, and the focus is young-person friendly and based on the highest level of professional care.

**Said Paul, who has been a residential student since sixth class:**

*"There are six students in my house, all aged between 14 and 19. We have good craic in the evenings. For any parent with a vision impaired [VI] child, it may be their only VI child. But over here everyone is VI, I get to do so many more things, and staff are here to help me with my homework when I need it. I also get all my activities in, which I love."*

FOR MORE DETAILS  
ON CHILDVISION  
RESIDENTIAL, CALL US ON  
**01 837 3635**

## BRAILLE FACT: DID YOU KNOW?

When a blind child or young person reads in braille, they are **activating the same regions of the brain as a sighted person** who is reading a standard print book.

Without alternative reading formats like braille, our blind and vision impaired students would never have a chance at reading.

**It's essential as A-B-C!**





# Library and Reading Services: Worlds at their fingertips...

What does a library look like when it's purpose-built for young, disabled blind learners?

## It looks, in short, like the ChildVision Library:

Touch and feel the tactile books. Trace your fingertips over one of thousands of braille fiction and non-fiction volumes, from Harry Potter to astronomy. Test a digital braille display or a notetaker for yourself, or read alongside a sighted partner using a twin vision book. Immerse yourself in the wheelchair-accessible Story Zone.

Behind the scenes it's just as remarkable a resource – and can be for you and your child or young person, no matter how far from campus you might be.

Nearly 900 library members from across Ireland use Freepost to borrow books in alternative formats such as tactile, large print, and braille. And over two thirds of all braille books now comply with Unified English braille code.

**ChildVision's National Braille Production also transcribes all text books for vision impaired children attending mainstream or special schools in Ireland:**

- Nearly 4,000 books were transcribed during the most recent school year
- Current formats include braille, large print, DAISY accessible mp3 files, customised text files for use with speech output or magnification and MOON
- All transcriptions follow recognised national and international guidelines
- Reading Services provides a free download facility
- The service is **demand-led, free, and open to all children with a registered visual impairment in Ireland**

From the tiniest pre-schoolers to the oldest vocational students, it's about putting worlds at their fingertips.

Near Dublin?  
Contact us for a tour.

## WHEN SHE PLAYS... MEET AMY

She didn't walk until she was eight. Didn't eat on her own until she was five. But when she plays the uilleann pipes, none of that matters anymore.

Amy was born with optic nerve hypoplasia, or ONH, that happens when the optic nerves connecting the brain to the eye begin to die back. Other things come with ONH. An absolute fear of food. Insomnia. A locking away of emotions.

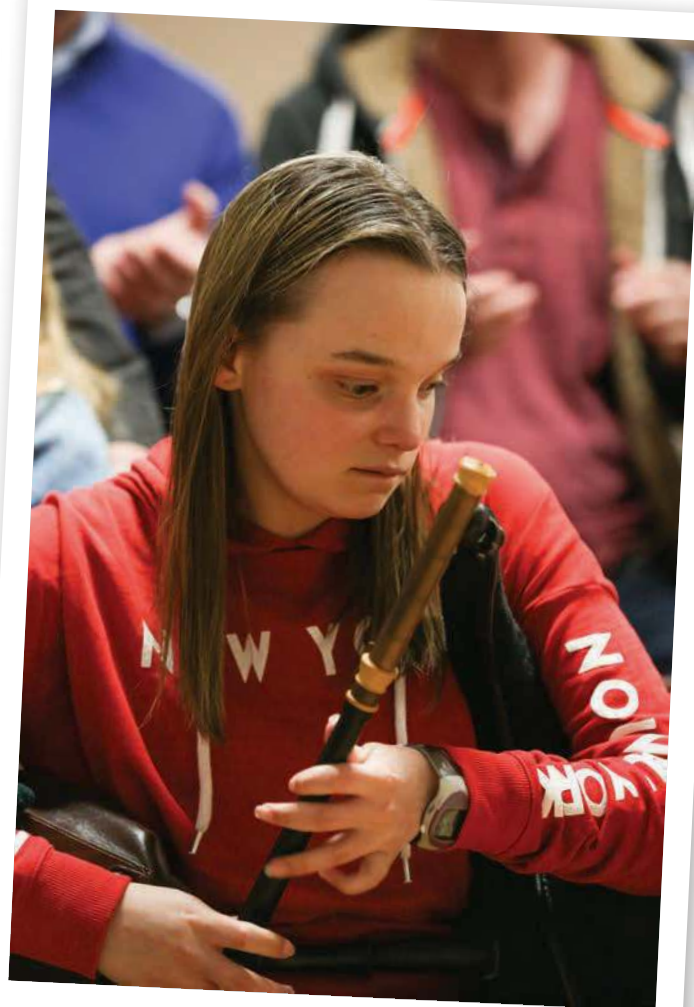
By the time Amy came to ChildVision she was nine months of age and totally blind. Her brokenhearted parents were wracked with worry.

Right away teachers and therapists here started a routine with Amy, based in play, to take the fear out of touching food she couldn't see. Work with a walker taught her balance.

**The day the uilleann pipes were placed in her hands as part of music therapy, Amy smiled.** She's been with ChildVision, and playing the pipes, ever since.

Said her therapist, *"From the time she was tiny, Amy had a great memory. And the pipes have been great for her, it's the best therapy she could get as the technical coordination is so complex to master."*

Not long ago Amy turned seventeen, and started vocational education here.



Her dream for the future?  
To teach the pipes to others.  
If anyone can, it's Amy.





# Music, Horticulture, and More:

## Freeing untapped potential...

There is no way to predict what will spark new learning and enthusiasm in a child who may be totally blind and facing other daunting disabilities.

At ChildVision we offer as many opportunities as possible to kindle that spark and help it grow bright.

On campus you will find everything from **music lessons and therapy** to **pottery**, a **petting zoo**, **swimming pool**, **greenhouses**, and more.

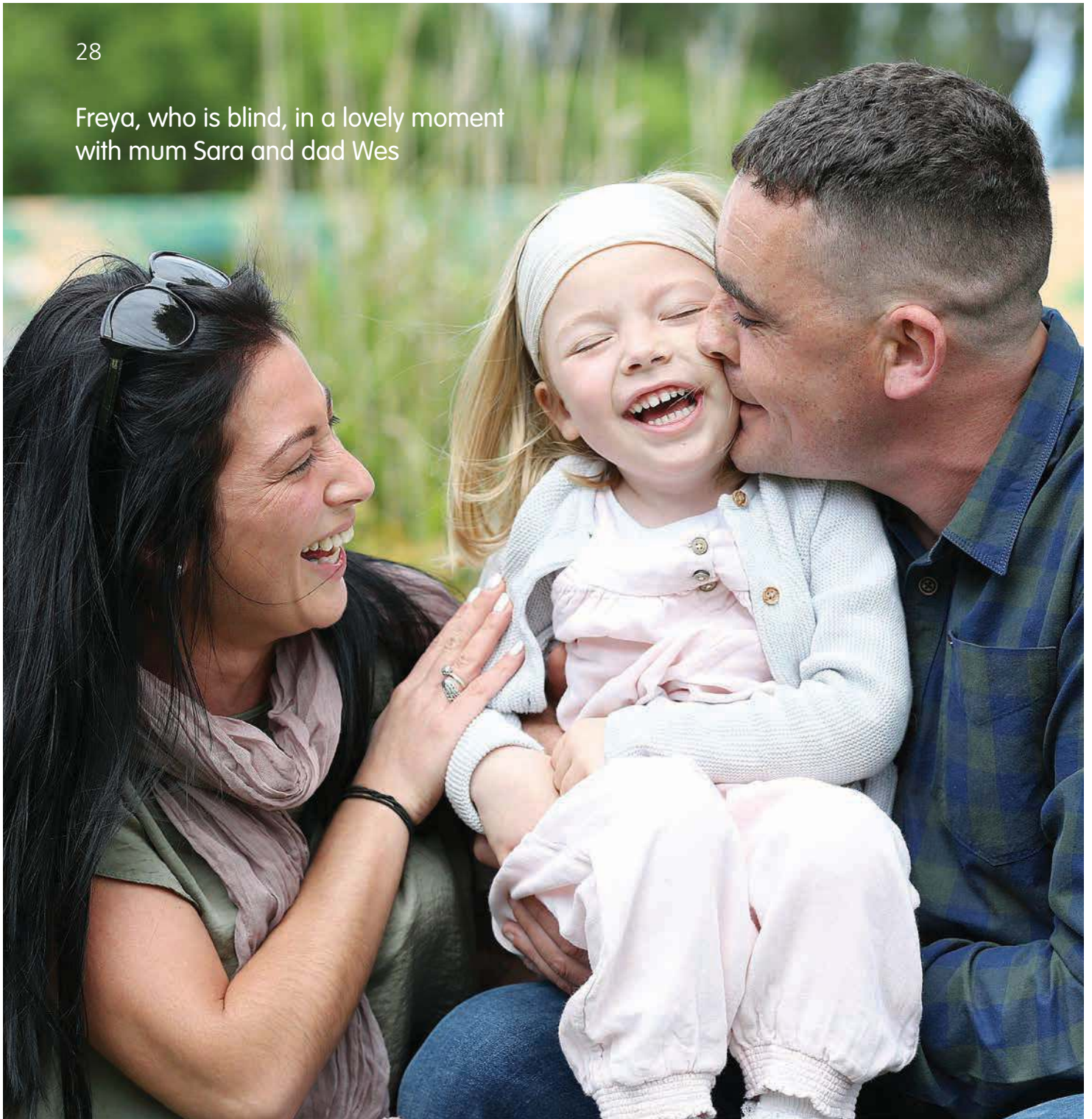
Children and young people can **groom the equine therapy horses**, **collect eggs from the hens**, **learn about horticulture**, **cook pizza in the pizza oven**, do **mobility lessons beside the aviary**, take part in **blind judo lessons**, plus a host of other activities that bring joy and change and confidence to their day.

We have budding musicians and video bloggers and horticulturists and blind judo students, right here on campus and among our graduates. Each began with activities they might never have discovered a passion for, if not for coming here.



From the smallest victory to the greatest, it's about freeing a child's untapped potential – regardless of how well their eyes can see or their bodies can move.

Freya, who is blind, in a lovely moment with mum Sara and dad Wes



“When we came to ChildVision, that alone feeling started to lift. Everyone had different stories but we were all there for the same reason. This had been so hard to find in our own community. It was like we finally found ‘our place.’ When despair is stopping everything else, ChildVision are like a family with such expertise and warm hearts that help you find a way.”

**Sara, mum to Freya**



# Family Services:

## This is Your Place...

It can be easy to feel all alone in the world when you first learn your child or young person has sight loss.

Suddenly, everything is different.

How will they get by? How will you cope? What about the future? What if you live far from ChildVision and can't get to us?

## We can help

**Family Services is for vision** impaired children and young people, who may or may not have additional disabilities, and for the people who care for them.

We work across Ireland, no matter where in Ireland you are, to connect you to **reliable information, a network of support and services, and a regular calendar of activities and workshops:**

- **On-site, hands-on workshops** on mobility, adaptive technology, feeding, and other topics centred on the needs of vision impaired children with multiple disabilities

- **Mobile, on- and off-site talks and training for parents and professionals** on accessing and understanding your entitlements, orientation and mobility for vision impaired children, reaching the child with deaf blindness, and many other topics.
- **Free national borrowing service** for braille, audio, and tactile books for your child or young person, and other materials on sight loss for adult caregivers
- **Much-loved Summer Camp, Space Camp, and themed Saturdays**
- **Annual Respite Weekend** where the whole family is invited to a beautiful weekend getaway, with nurses and ChildVision staff on hand so parents can relax and mingle.

If your child attends ChildVision or even just comes for an assessment, you are invited to join in our Family Services. Ring us on 01 837 3635 for more.



# Nursing and Vision Clinics: Special Care On-Site...

At ChildVision we believe that the need for hourly medication, or a feeding tube, or a chemotherapy line is no reason to deny a blind child a chance at an education.

In fact many of the children and young people who attend ChildVision have complex medical conditions in addition to sight loss, ranging from diabetes, and epilepsy, to Apert, and Raynaud's syndromes, to nephritis and neuroblastoma.

ChildVision offer **on-site nursing support for children throughout the school day** – and **24-hour, on-call nursing support for our residential houses**, to ensure that each child gets the help he or she needs, including:

- Administration of medication
- Respiratory support
- Specialised oral or artificial feeding (such as peg, or tube feeding)
- Epilepsy and seizure management (including rescue medications)
- Blood pressure monitoring
- Diabetes management
- Management of Hickman lines for chemotherapy
- Urostomy, colostomy, or catheterisation care
- Toilet training and self-care skills

**For children who attend Childvision, our nursing team also run two clinics:**

- **The Eye Clinic**, held in association with The Children's University Hospital Temple Street, provides parents and teachers with information on their child or young person's visual ability and potential.
- **The Low Vision Clinic**, determines how each child manages with their sight loss on a daily basis, and the visual aids that will best help them to learn. This clinic also includes a visiting ocularist who fits prosthetic eyes for children that need them.



# FACT BOX

## ABOUT CORTICAL VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

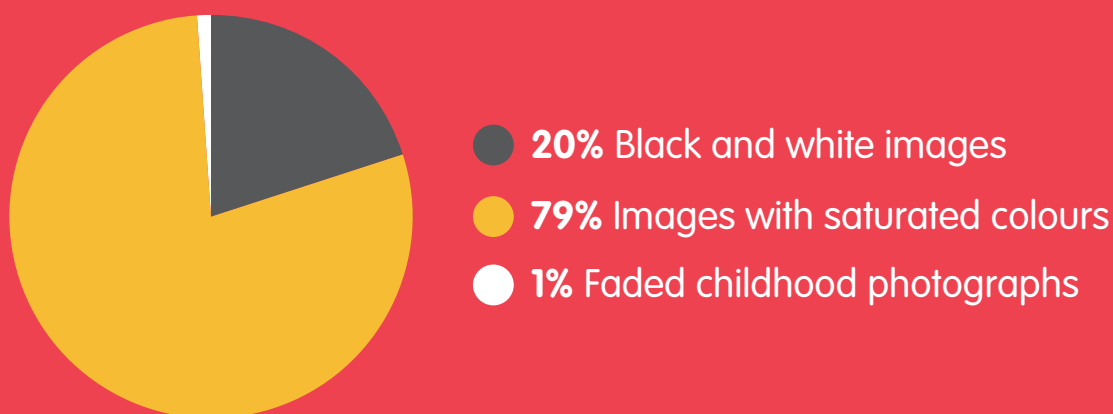
Cortical visual impairment (CVI) is a term used to describe visual impairment that occurs due to brain injury. CVI differs from other types of visual impairment which are due to physical problems with the eyes.

CVI is caused by damage to the visual centre of the brain – the eye is able to see but the brain is not interpreting what is being seen.

### Typical Characteristics of CVI

- Your child might prefer a certain colour
- Many children require movement to see an object
- Sometimes children need time to see an object
- Difficulty with visual complexity – single coloured toys against black backgrounds are easier than multi-coloured toys to focus on

### What do children with Cortical Visual Impairment see best



CVI often goes undiagnosed as the structure of the eye is normal. Many parents are told there is no way of knowing what or how much their child can see, or that nothing can be done, or wait and see. But with appropriate intervention, progress can be made with CVI.

If your child or young person has a diagnosis of CVI it's vital they have vision assessments and therapy like the kind you can find at ChildVision.



# Courses for Parents and Professionals:

## Skill builders...

Whether you're a visiting teacher looking to better help a vision-impaired child in your classroom, or a mum or dad, parent or guardian who wants to learn braille so you can be a bigger part of your blind child's world, ChildVision offers courses and training for you.

Some workshops are part of continuing education here and you may find yourself learning alongside several of our staff. You are always welcome to attend – all you need is a specific interest in the topic.



### Additional topic-specific workshops have included topics such as:

- Mental health for people with sensory impairments
- Vision and visual impairment in children with additional needs
- Improving opportunities for inclusion and participation for visually impaired young adults with multiple disabilities
- Raising a child with a visual impairment and additional disabilities

**To discover what's on and to sign up to a course or workshop, ring us on 01 837 3635. We'll put you in touch with the right person.**



### The following accredited training is offered at ChildVision:

- QQI Level 5 'Learn Braille'
- Certificate in Higher Education: 'Working with People with a Visual Impairment' (in collaboration with the University of Worcester)



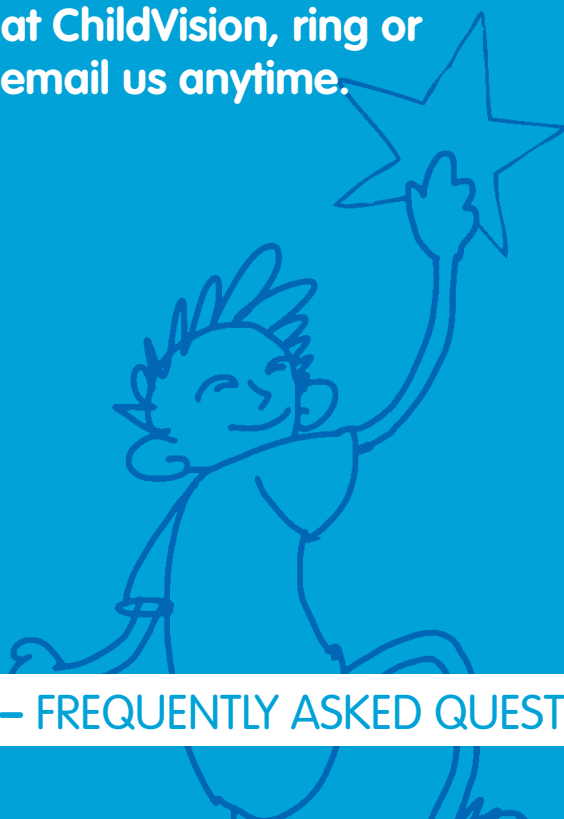
# Research and Innovation Projects: Gifts to tomorrow...

In addition to being dedicated to helping every student at ChildVision reach their best and brightest potential, staff here are equally passionate about researching, improving and sharing what we know to make life better for blind children all over the world. And in some instances, ChildVision is the only place in the world where you'll find work like this happening. Our specialists also regularly present on their work, at international sight loss and disability conferences from Barcelona to Beijing.

## Three recent and ongoing projects include:

- **How equine assisted therapy helps some children to reach a variety of goals such as peer interaction and taking on new challenges** (published in the *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy* as "The Effect of an Equine Assisted Therapy Programme on Children's Occupational Performance")
- **How new sensory-based interventions can help children with sensory processing disorder to stay calmer** (the ChildVision OT department is the only place in the world using this technique, and may lead to a breakthrough)
- **Creating a version of ADOS, the current gold standard in autism assessment, that can be accurately and reliably used for blind children** (diagnosing autism in a vision impaired child is widely acknowledged to be difficult; this project is working to overcome that challenge)

**To learn about more innovative projects happening at ChildVision, ring or email us anytime.**



**NO QUERY TOO SMALL – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ►**

# Your Frequently Asked Questions: At ChildVision, no query is too small...

She called us from the hospital parking lot, crying. "They told us that our baby son is blind, and that a genetic disorder means he mightn't ever speak or walk!" the mum sobbed. "A nurse said you could help us. What if there is nowhere for my baby?"

At ChildVision, we receive lots of calls – and many are fraught with worry and fear. No matter your query, large or small, you are welcome to ring us and ask.

HERE ARE SOME ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

## **Who attends ChildVision?**

Blind or vision impaired children and young people from all across Ireland who are between the ages of birth to 23 attend ChildVision, including those with other additional, and often profound, disabilities.

## **What ages do you cater to?**

We cater to children and young people from birth to 23 years of age.

## **What if my child isn't totally blind?**

Children and young people with low vision attend ChildVision as well. All have a diagnosis from an ophthalmologist or optometrist of a visual impairment that cannot be corrected by glasses or lenses, such as visual acuity of 6/18 or less.

## **What if my child has other disabilities in addition to sight loss?**

As long as your child meets the age and vision criteria, we can help. Many students here have other disabilities in addition to sight loss that range from autism to cerebral palsy to rare genetic disorders. We work to help them make the most of what they can do, every day.



### **What if my child has medical issues that require nursing care?**

Many of our students couldn't attend ChildVision without medical support. Over the course of a day our on-site nursing team provides care that includes respiratory support, epilepsy management, peg (tube) feeding, and management of Hickman lines used in chemotherapy.

### **Do I need a GP referral?**

You don't need a GP referral for your child to attend ChildVision. But your child does need a vision-impaired diagnosis. See page 3 for more details.

### **Will my child be able to attend school?**

ChildVision's Early Years on our Drumcondra campus and in Cork are open to children with all abilities. This includes vision impaired children who have additional disabilities. There is also a primary school on our Dublin campus.

### **What hours will my child need to attend? All five weekdays?**

Five days each week are not required. Children and young people attend ChildVision for one day each week, or all five, a schedule that changes and will grow with your child.



### **Must my child attend school there or live at ChildVision?**

No. While some students do choose to live in our Residential Houses, many of our children and young people still live at home and attend school here. Some others live at home, attend mainstream schools, and come to ChildVision for therapy.

### **We don't live near Dublin. Can my child still be helped?**

Yes. ChildVision looks after the national assessment of all children and young people with a visual impairment aged 0 to 23. It doesn't matter where in Ireland you are, we can organise a time and date that suits you.

### **How is ChildVision funded? Is there a fee?**

Roughly half of what we do is funded by the State. The rest comes from the kind donations of generous people across Ireland who care about helping blind children to have a brighter future.



### **Are your stables, riding arena, and equine therapy horses on-site?**

Yes they are. All equine therapy takes place on our 7 acre Drumcondra campus. There is also a sensory trail! To see if your child would benefit from our equine therapy, which is open to both ChildVision students and non-students, ring us.

### **Could my family and I come to campus for a visit?**

Of course! We'd be delighted to meet you. ChildVision follow an academic calendar, and you can ring us on 01 837 3635 to arrange a visit.

### **Will you talk with my child's GPs? Teachers?**

Yes, of course, whatever makes sense for sharing and helping your child get the best help possible.

### **Do you provide support for parents, siblings, and other family members?**

Yes. If your child attends ChildVision full time or even just comes for an assessment, your whole family is invited to avail of our Family Services. See page 29 for more.

### **Do you train educators and other professionals?**

Yes. ChildVision provides a number of professional courses and workshops including FETAC/QQI Level 5 'Learn Braille' course and a Certificate in Higher Education 'Working with People with a Visual Impairment.' Ring us for details.

### **Could you teach me braille so I can help my child?**

Yes. Our 'Learn Braille' course is FETAC/QQI certified and open to family members as well.

### **Where in Ireland can I borrow braille, tactile, and audio books for my child?**

The ChildVision Library is open to any child with a visual impairment in Ireland, and we loan books and materials to members from all across the country. This includes braille, tactile, and audio books. We also stock an extensive list of books for parents and professionals living and working with a child with a visual impairment. Find our catalogues on [childvision.ie/site/resources/library/](http://childvision.ie/site/resources/library/). Membership is open to all.





Listen to the mustn'ts, child,  
Listen to the don'ts  
Listen to the shouldn'ts  
The impossibles, the won'ts  
Listen to the never haves,  
then listen close to me —  
Anything can happen, child.  
Anything can be."

**Shel Silverstein,  
Where the Sidewalk Ends**



## IT'S EASY TO FIND US:

### Contact details, campus tours, and directions

The beautiful and welcoming ChildVision campus is conveniently located just off the M50 and nestled in the heart of Drumcondra, and we'd love to welcome you.

To reach us for a visit and arrange a time that suits, ring us on 01 837 3635.

#### **Our Address**

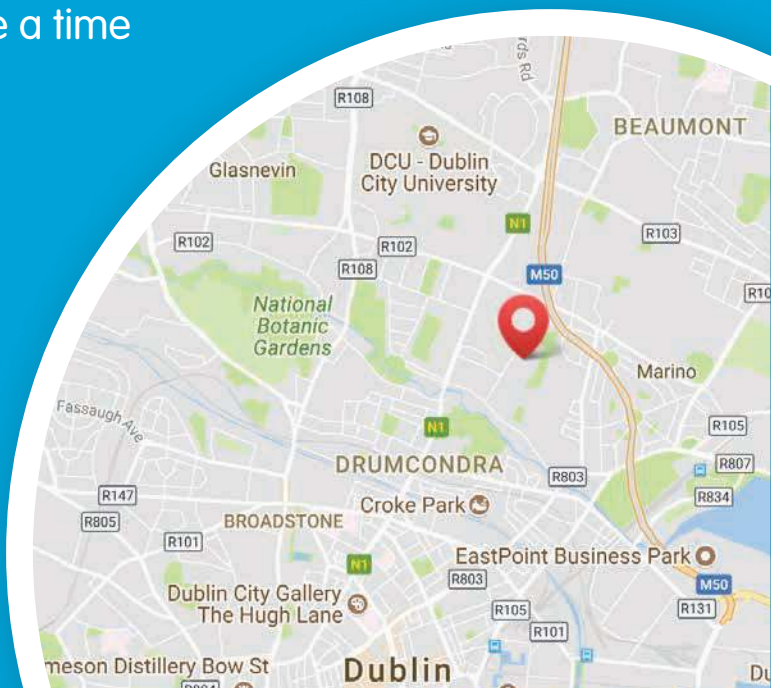
Grace Park Road, Drumcondra,  
Dublin 9, D09 WK0H.

#### **Our Phone**

01 837 3635

#### **Our Email**

[info@childvision.ie](mailto:info@childvision.ie)





Just because our children can't see the stars,  
doesn't mean they can't reach for them...

Thank you for believing in Ireland's blind children.  
And thank you for learning more about the work of ChildVision.

CONTACT US ANYTIME

**ChildVision**

National Education Centre for Blind Children

Grace Park Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, Ireland. [www.childvision.ie](http://www.childvision.ie)

