Children and Young People’s Services

Specialist Inclusion Teams

Habilitation Provision
Supporting Children with Visual Impairment
and their Families

Specialist Inclusion Teams
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Foreword
The Specialist Inclusion Team (SIT) offers habilitation training, guidance and support to children with visual impairment and their families.

Within the context of this document, Habilitation refers to the teaching of Mobility, Orientation and Independent Living Skills and focuses on individual children and their family’s specific set of needs at any time during the early years or throughout their education.

In 2011 a set of Quality Standards in Habilitation were published. ‘These were the outcome of the Mobility 21 Project funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in England from 2007. This project involved collaboration between the Institute of Education (IOE) at the University of London and the Royal National Institute of Blind people (RNIB).’ (Quality Standards, 2011)

‘These Quality Standards are designed to ensure that children and young people with visual impairment are enabled, through high quality mobility and independence training and support, to achieve the greatest possible independence and maximise their outcomes and life chances.’ (Quality Standards, 2011)

In reaction to the Quality Standards Calderdale sought to develop the competencies of members of their visual impairment team through completion of the Graduate Diploma: Specialist Qualification in Habilitation and Disabilities of Sight (Children and Young People) through the Institute of Education, University of London. The team is also involved in continued professional development through the professional body HabVIUK. This has helped to ensure that Calderdale have a Habilitation Team who can continually meet the quality standards and provide up-to-date, comprehensive habilitation provision.

Calderdale recognises the needs and concerns of parents and families with regard to the independence of their children and it is our intention to meet their needs wherever it is possible.

Calderdale works to ensure that habilitation programmes help to facilitate access to the broad additional curriculum.

Calderdale recognises that some children and young people, who have a visual impairment, may require ongoing habilitation training and that others may only require input at specific times during the early years or whilst in education.
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Introduction
What is Habilitation?

The term ‘habilitation’ relates to the teaching and learning of techniques and strategies which enable children and young people with visual impairment (VI) to develop Mobility & Orientation and Independent Living Skills.

Mobility & Orientation refers to skills and techniques which enable a child or young person to explore, move or travel safely and as independently as possible.

Independent Living Skills includes any activity which a child or young person would be expected to be able to carry out at a certain age or stage of their development.

Within both of these areas a wide range of skills and techniques can be taught from the basic to the complex. The focus is always on the child’s specific set of needs, their age and ability at any time during the early years or whilst in education.

The outcome of habilitation training is always for the child to achieve their full potential and become as independent as possible. Broader outcomes specifically for children who have a visual impairment, as taken from the Quality Standards (2001) include:

- “The maximum degree of independent living.
- The maximum degree of independent travel and mobility.
- Emotional well-being, including self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The maximum degree of social inclusion.
- Competence in the use of any specialist habilitation tools as aids to mobility and independence.
- The ability to be able to assess risks and anticipate likely areas of personal difficulty in mobility and independent living.

These complement and are additional to the ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes outlined in the Children’s Plan 2020, which apply to all children and young people:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Economic well-being” (Quality Standards, 2011)
The Habilitation Team
The Calderdale Habilitation Team consists of:

Habilitation Manager (Registered Qualified Habilitation Specialist)

Responsible for:
- the management of the Habilitation team.
- initial assessments.
- direct 1:1 teaching.
- monitoring and evaluation of the work carried out by the team.
- programme planning.
- evaluation of progress.
- environmental audits and risk assessments.
- family liaison and support.
- development of extra-curricular activities including Duke of Edinburgh’s award.
- research and development.
- continued professional development of the team.

Habilitation Officer (Registered Qualified Habilitation Specialist – QHS)

Responsible for:
- planning and delivery of habilitation programmes.
- lesson planning.
- assessing skills.
- monitoring progress.
- reporting outcomes and progress.
- setting targets.
- environmental audits and risk assessments.
- supporting extra-curricular activities.

Habilitation Assistant (Registered Qualified Habilitation – QHA)

Responsible for:
- delivery of mobility and orientation programmes.
- lesson planning.
- assessing skills.
- monitoring progress.
- reporting outcomes and progress.
- setting targets.
- supporting extra-curricular activities.
The Habilitation Training We Offer
Examples of some of the key areas which are supported during habilitation training include:

**Mobility & Orientation**
- Environmental Audits and Risk Assessment.
- Family Liaison.
- School Liaison with key staff.
- Initial Assessment.
- Early Years Activities – Encouraging Exploration and Movement Through Play.
- Body and Spatial Awareness.
- Sequencing.
- Confidence Building.
- Asking for Help.
- Navigating the Classroom and School.
- Problem Solving.
- Route Planning.
- Accessing and Using Maps.
- Outdoor Travel Skills.
- Environmental Awareness.
- Mobility Aids.
- Long Cane Training.
- Transition Training.
- Public Environments and Buildings.
- Using Public Transport.
- Accessing technology to aid mobility and orientation.
- Interpersonal and Communication Skills.

**Independent Living Skills**
- Environmental Audits and Risk Assessment
- Family Liaison
- School Liaison with key staff
- Initial Assessment
- Social Interaction and Confidence Building
- Health and Social Wellbeing
- Making Choices
- Self-care Routines
- Dressing
- Accessing Technology, Specialist Equipment and Mainstream Equipment
- Meal Times
- Domestic Routines
- Asking for Help
- Food and Drink Preparation
- Money Recognition and Management
- Accessing Shops and Shopping
- Public Environments and Buildings
- Banking
- Using the Post Office
• Preparation for College, Placement or Work
• Self Esteem and Emotional Well-being including the implications of visual condition

These are not exhaustive lists. Any or all of these areas of training can be provided to children and young people. Some may be more appropriate than others for individual children. The programmes taught will be specific to each individual child’s assessment outcomes and tailored to suit their needs and ability. Activities and tasks will always encourage the child or young person to progress and develop in their ability and focus will be placed upon what they can achieve.

Mobility and Orientation and Independent Living Skills training will often run alongside one another. A child or young person, ideally, will have access to both of these areas of training as and when it is required.

Training will always be delivered by a qualified member of Calderdale staff in accordance with the Quality Standard in Habilitation (2011) and the Calderdale Habilitation Policy and Procedure (2014).

From Referral to Delivery

Early intervention
Ideally the Habilitation Specialist (QHS) will be involved with the child as early as possible. This will involve an introduction and sharing of information to provide the family with background knowledge of some of the support which can be offered should it be required. The HS will offer families specific advice on particular activities which can be carried out with children regularly to encourage development and increase independence. Sometimes it will be appropriate to visit the family regularly to offer the necessary support or to continue to monitor the child’s development. The level of support offered will be dependent upon the individual child’s specific set of needs as determined from the habilitation assessment. The QHS will work closely with the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) and any other SIT support staff involved with the child.

Referrals
A referral to the habilitation team for formal training will often arise from early year’s intervention but may also occur at other ages and stages of development. The QTVI will refer a child or young person to the QHS for assessment. They will provide written documentation outlining the child’s visual needs, any other difficulties they may experience as well as all other key information relating to the child. The QHS will arrange to carry out a detailed initial assessment to determine the level of input required. The QTVI and HS will work together closely to ensure each child’s needs are met. Before any formal training is carried out the QHS will carry out an Environmental Audit and Risk Assessment to ensure the training ground is safe and appropriate.
Access Audits
An Environmental Audit will normally be carried out before a child with visual needs attends an educational provision. The QTVI will request an audit to be carried out by the QHS. This will involve a visit to the establishment which will normally be accompanied by someone who is in charge of buildings. All areas of the building will be checked and any recommendations will be discussed. A document is provided which informs the provision of ways in which they can make the environment accessible and safe for a child with VI. It includes check lists and action plans to help support any recommendations for adaptations to the environment which the QHS may make.

Environmental Audits
An Environmental Audit will normally be carried out by the QHS for any training ground which is to be used for habilitation training. This provides an opportunity to understand all aspects of the environment to ensure the safe delivery of training within it. These key aspects include:
- Lighting.
- Colour contrasting.
- Obstacles and hazards.
- Floor, pavements and road surfaces.
- Doors, steps, stairs and lifts.
- Auditory features and noise/potential noise.
- Accessibility (ie for a wheelchair or long cane user).
- Road crossings

The environmental audit may be carried out at different times of day; for example at night or in adverse weather conditions to assess the effect on lighting and sound; at busy times of the day in schools to assess for safe travel. This will be dependent upon the training ground and the specific training being delivered.

Risk Assessment
Based on findings from the Access Audit and Environmental Audits a risk assessment will be carried out for all training grounds which will include present and potential risks and hazards and how these will be effectively managed during training sessions.

Environmental Audits and Risk Assessments will be reviewed regularly.

Initial Assessments
Assessment involves detailed discussions with the child and parents and where a child is of school age, the SENCo and other school based support staff. It also involves observing practical skills and abilities. It provides an opportunity for:
- Introducing the CYP and parents to the QHS.
- Providing an opportunity for the CYP to discuss their skills, strengths and areas where they require further support.
- Allowing the CYP to be fully involved in the decision making process regarding the training they will receive.
- Assessing current knowledge, skills and abilities.
• Determining skills and abilities which require further support and development.

All findings are recorded on the CYPs habilitation file. Initial assessment documentation will help to support the planning of individual habilitation training when input is required.

Planning for Habilitation Training
Where the initial assessment identifies that habilitation input is necessary the information from the assessment will help to plan for the training. The QHS will prepare an Individual Habilitation Plan (IHP) which will outline:

• All contacts associated with the CYP including school, parents/carers, support staff, other organisations or professionals involved
• Details of the visual impairment and the impact this has upon learning
• Details of other difficulties, medical conditions and medication
• Findings and recommendations from the assessment
• Action Plan of support including the type of training, strategies and resources, the people involved, time factors, targets, success and assessment criteria and evaluation.

Delivery
Habilitation support will be delivered within an environment which is appropriate to meet the needs of each child. This could be at home, school, outdoors, in public spaces or inside public buildings. Where appropriate a child will receive weekly habilitation support. Sessions will be of varying length depending on the focus and needs of the child. Some sessions will have a focus on mobility and orientation or independent living skills. Sometimes these lessons will combine, for example when teaching shopping skills mobility and independent living skills are apparent. Often part of the lesson will be spent discussing progress and future planning with the CYP, involving them as fully as possible in the decision making regarding their own learning. Teaching styles will be adapted to suit the needs of individual children but sessions will always be pupil lead.

Monitoring Progress and Achievement
The QHS will monitor children’s progress and achievements during each lesson and written records will be kept. The QHS will regularly review the lesson records and discuss outcomes, achievement and progress. Progress and achievement will be shared regularly with the QTVI, SENCo, Teaching Assistant (TA) and parents.

Involving Those Linked to the CYP
When a child is referred for a habilitation assessment the Habilitation Manager will make contact with the child’s parent/carer and the SENCo at the school. They will ensure regular contact is maintained.

The habilitation team will work closely with other SIT support staff linked to the child as well as school based staff, family members, health professionals, social services or any other professional who is linked to the child. This will involve providing information, support or training opportunities or gathering information in relation to the child.
During the early years, where input is normally carried out within the home, the family will be able to observe and be involved in all habilitation sessions. Support staff including the QTVI and Early Years TA will regularly observe the work carried out by, and liaise with, the habilitation team.

During the school years parents will have an opportunity to observe lessons at key stages of development or when they request to do so. The QHS will liaise regularly with family members. They will also liaise with a member of the school support staff in order to maintain a consistent approach to the skills, techniques and language used within the training.

The habilitation team will provide direct training in habilitation techniques to SIT support staff, school based staff, families and the peer group of the child.

Safeguarding
In order to ensure that children are safe all members of the habilitation team will be expected to:

- Be qualified to work with children and young people.
- Hold a qualification in Habilitation or Mobility and Orientation.
- Carry out regular continued professional development training.
- Complete DBS checks and update these as necessary.
- Complete Safeguarding Children training and update this as necessary.
- Know the child protection co-ordinator at SIT and the procedure to follow should a cause for concern arise.
- Know the child protection co-ordinator in the school and the procedure to follow should a cause for concern arise.
- Have a good working knowledge and practice of data protection.
- Be observed regularly by the QHS Manager to ensure teaching is of a continually high standard and differentiated to suit individual children’s needs.
- Have regular access to the QHS Manager to discuss concerns, issues and for general advice.

Professional Body
The professional body has now been renamed HabVIUK but the links below remain live until 1 January 2016 when they will be linked to the new name.

Mobility and Independent Specialists in Education (MISE) http://www.mise.org.uk/
"MISE is a notational support and development group of professionals who work with children who have visual impairment. Over the last few years’ members worked closely with the Mobility21 project to inform the formulation of National Quality Standards for the Delivery of Habilitation Training (Mobility and Independent Living Skills) for Children and Young People with Visual Impairment."
MISE offers professional body registration for those qualified/experienced to deliver habilitation. Members of the IPaSS habilitation team are registered with MISE. The group meets twice a year for a professional meeting and for members to be involved in continued professional development. IPaSS Habilitation Specialists attend both of these meetings to ensure they continue to work in line with the Quality Standards and receive relevant training opportunities.

**Contact Information**
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**Reference Materials**
Quality Standards
Miller, Wall, Garner (2011)