**The Role of Sensory Assistant/**

**Assistant Rehabilitation Officer**

Note: The term “qualified professional” is used throughout to mean a professional who holds a qualification in Vision Rehabilitation at level 5 or above.

The role of non-qualified assistant workers in a team can make a significant difference to the capabilities of the whole team. The input of such colleagues should be greatly valued and their own training needs and professional development should be nurtured.

Non-qualified workers are in a position to support qualified professionals in many ways. However, it is essential that the whole team clearly understands where professional boundaries lie and that professional indemnity underpins what an individual is qualified to do and what they are not. Vision rehabilitation work carries some notable professional risks, from assessment onwards, and vision loss is rarely the only consideration. In addition vision rehabilitation involves **teaching** skills and analysing how clients **learn**; their qualification training will have prepared them for this skill.

The purpose of this guidance is to help managers and their teams reach sound and safe conclusions about how services can be delivered.

General principles

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| **Unqualified Professional** | **Qualified Professional** |
| Possess knowledge and understanding of the benefits of vision rehabilitation and the basic principles, procedures and processes of vision rehabilitation | Possess comprehensive, factual and theoretical knowledge of vision rehabilitation and the way clients learn.  |
| Possess an understanding of the boundaries between unqualified and qualified professionals in relation to knowledge and working practice, based on an understanding of professional risk. See RWPN’s **assessment of professional risk** for qualified professionals**.** | Possess a comprehensive, factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of *professional risk* when assessing, planning and executing vision rehabilitation. See RWPN’s **assessment of professional risk** for qualified professionals. |
| Work under the direction of a qualified professional where appropriate | Direct, and have oversight of, tasks and responsibilities to unqualified professional, where appropriate |
| Refer on to qualified professionals where situations require input beyond the knowledge and skills of an unqualified professional | Receive and respond to referrals from unqualified professionals |
| Undertake continuing professional development: to receive opportunities for personal development and to learn skills as appropriate for the role and to support qualified professionals | Undertake continued professional development: Mandatory cycle of CPD to maintain registration across the full breath of the professional skill-set |
| Sensory impairment: an awareness and understanding of sensory impairment, sensory loss its effect on daily life. | Visual impairment: an understanding of: the anatomy, epidemiology, cause and prognosis of visual impairment and deafblindness; the cumulative effect of physiological and psychological illness or disability when combined with a visual impairment; the relevance and value of individual and social models of disability, the physical, psychological and social impact of loss of vision |
| Assessment: with the agreement, and under the direction of, a qualified professional, undertake screening assessments and other assessments of restricted scope to assist in meeting the needs and aspirations of clients and their families; to provide a supporting role for qualified professionals in completing specialist/functional assessments | Assessment: to undertake a range of specialist/functional visual impairment assessments founded on an understanding of statutory process, procedure and national legal requirements; to undertake such assessments with an understanding of risk, to undertake such assessment with an understanding of how the outcomes of assessments can meet the aspirations and needs of clients and their families; to undertake such assessments to plan and execute a vision rehabilitation plan |

Duties of a sensory assistant/assistant rehabilitation officer may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

* participate in the delivery of rehabilitation programmes in appropriate cases, under the direction of a qualified professional
* reinforce skills taught by a qualified professional and under their direction
* undertake, through initial screening, the process of registration as sight impaired or severely sight impaired
* assist in identifying clients who are deafblind and add them to the register of deafblind people
* deliver, install and demonstrate relevant equipment to visually impaired people and ensure they can use it safely and independently
* provide information and advice and – where appropriate – teach, information technology and other communication methods to clients
* identify any additional needs that arise during work with clients and refer on to a qualified professional
* provide advice, support and signposting for clients, their family and carers
* manage the administration, delivery and installation of the British Wireless for the Blind Fund
* support the service with grant applications on behalf of clients
* manage equipment stock
* co-ordinate and manage, under the direction of a qualified professional, group work/support groups with and for clients
* promote, as appropriate, the service to internal and external audiences

In the absence of (or in addition to) a specialist hearing loss technical officer

* undertake specialist assessments with people with hearing impairment
* deliver and install specialist equipment to hard of hearing people to meet their needs
* ensure hearing impaired clients are able to use the equipment safely and independently

Knowledge and qualities may include, but are not limited to:

* awareness and understanding of sensory impairment, sensory loss its effect on daily life
* knowledge and understanding of the benefits of vision rehabilitation and the basic principles, procedures and pathways involved in service delivery within the organisation and other national and local providers
* ability to work independently, but also under direction; an awareness and understanding of role of the qualified Vision Rehabilitation Worker and the role of risk analysis that informs their work
* awareness of relevant legislation, including equality and safeguarding legislation