Scheme of Work and Policy Document

1. **Introduction & definition of Habilitation Training**

   Birmingham Education Department offers Habilitation training for children and young people (CYP) with a visual impairment under the auspices of the Habilitation Team at Priestley Smith School. Habilitation is the current term for mobility and independence training. Mobility training enhances the ability of a child with a sight problem to travel as safely and independently as possible between two given (specific) points. Travel may be facilitated by specialised strategies, maximising residual vision and auditory skills, using low vision aids\(^1\) and / or developing cane techniques. The term CYP is used throughout this document rather than child as students may potentially be aged between 0 and 25.

   Great emphasis is placed on the safety of the individual. The scheme aims to develop a CYP’s confidence and abilities across a wide spectrum of skills, but also recognises that it is vital that any work undertaken is appropriate to the student’s age and abilities. The given points may range from 5 metres to 50 miles!

2. **Aims and Objectives**

   It is the role of the Habilitation Specialist (RQHS) to assess and identify the needs of the individual and implement a programme of work designed to meet those needs. This programme may include any or all of the above strategies and techniques and be in accordance with the current Mobility / Habilitation syllabus\(^2\) which will be updated as and when required. The objectives for each CYP will be set in accordance with their needs, age and abilities with their safety being paramount. The primary objective is to assist and train a student to be a safe traveller both indoors and out. Young people are also prepared to be as independent as possible to assist their transition to adulthood.

   The Habilitation programme may be either long term, as in the case of severely visually impaired or totally blind children, or may be fragmented in the form of a “top up” raising a CYP to a level appropriate to his or her age and then withdrawing until new requirements are identified. This strategy is particularly appropriate to children in mainstream who need to keep on a par with their peers. The needs of all C&YP with EHC Plans

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\(^1\) Low vision aids, subsequently referred to as LVA’s. A small selection of LVA’s are held by the Habilitation Service and training can be given in their use. LVA’s for personal use should be obtained through hospitals or Birmingham Focus.

\(^2\) Birmingham Education Habilitation Service mobility syllabus and its curricula in appendices.
are reviewed on a regular basis and Habilitation can and should be included in this.

Attainable targets should be set for individuals to encourage achievement and build confidence. These targets can be incorporated into ASDAN PSD or Youth Award Scheme achievements as well as IEPs or Individual Mobility plans. Achievements at all levels of competence will be recognised with stars, merits, certificates, or occasionally, another negotiated incentives.

Specific areas taught and levels of competence sought will differ from one individual to another but will be in line with the current Habilitation syllabus. This document may vary but will include directional and spatial concepts, mapping and orientation skills, gross and fine motor skills, cadence and gait, personal safety, travel, life skills and cane skills where required. All training will comply with the National Habilitation Standards. The Habilitation Team caters for CYP with a wide variety of visual impairments ranging from total blindness to extensive residual vision. Every effort is made to maximise the use of residual vision and develop auditory skills.

Habilitation Training is not an academic subject but offers CYP the chance to develop a range of personal skills and a sense of self worth leading to greater confidence and independence. It is recognised that chronological age is no indicator of developmental level or abilities. Both the Care Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2014/15 place requirements on Local Authorities to prepare CYP for Adulthood and place emphasis on overall wellbeing.

What are the 'wellbeing' principles?

The Care Act introduced a general duty on local authorities to promote an individual’s ‘wellbeing’. This means that they should always have a person’s wellbeing in mind and when making decisions about them or planning services.

Wellbeing can relate to:

- personal dignity (including treatment of the individual with respect)
- physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- protection from abuse and neglect
- control by the individual over day-to-day life (including over care and support)
- participation in work, education, training or recreation
- social and economic wellbeing

3 IEP Individual Education Plan
4 IMP Individual Mobility Plan sets specific reviewable targets for pupils.
• domestic, family and personal relationships
• suitability of living accommodation
• the individual’s contribution to society

SEND Code of Practice 2014/15 also includes similar requirements.

Chapter 8: Preparing for adulthood from the earliest years

How professionals across education, health and social care should support children and young people with SEND to prepare them for adult life, and help them go on to achieve the best outcomes in employment, independent living, health and community participation.

For the first time there is specific reference to access to Habilitation Training in this document.

The Habilitation Team views each child or young person as an individual and his or her needs are assessed and specific targets set from within the broader mobility and life skills spectrum, that actively promote improvements in the key outcomes for visually impaired children. Evidence shows that Habilitation Training improves preparedness for adulthood and enhances employability.

3. Criteria for Eligibility

➢ Any child referred must have a sight problem, (uncorrected) although it need not be their primary disability.
➢ The child must either be being educated within a school run by Birmingham City Council Education Department, whether mainstream, special or integrated unit/resource base or be supported by the Sensory Support Service or Portage, which would therefore include pre-school children.
➢ Pupils will normally be aged between 2 and 19, but in some circumstances the range can be from 0-25

4. Referrals

Referrals to the Habilitation Service are accepted from any involved professionals, including Sensory Support staff (SSS), Educational Psychologists, teachers, consultants etc. Parents may also refer their child. All referrals should be made in writing, on an official referral form\(^5\) which includes guidance on making appropriate referrals and a parental consent form for an assessment to take place. This form also gives permission for any necessary subsequent mobility training to take place on

\(^5\) Referral form included as appendix
or off the school site. Assessments cannot be undertaken without parental permission. Referral forms will be acknowledged on receipt. Information will be sent out to parents and schools regarding the proposed date and time of any assessment, together with information about what the assessment may entail and the name of the Habilitation Specialist. In certain circumstances actual training may be delivered by an Habilitation Assistant (RQA) or a trainee Habilitation Specialist under the direction of a RQHS.

Completion of a referral form does not guarantee an assessment within a set time span or training; resources are limited and some individuals may be identified as having greater or more urgent needs than others. Assessments will be conducted by a RQHS and recommendations made in writing regarding the need for subsequent training. Assessments are generally completed in the order in which they are received unless identified by the referring body as a particular priority, as yet it has not proved necessary to introduce more formal prioritisation. Requests for holiday work only, or female RQHS only, may increase waiting time. The decision of the Senior Habilitation Specialist is final.

Referrals are accepted for children with multiple disabilities provided they have a sight problem. Alternative strategies may need to be employed to enable such children to reach their potential but the nature of their additional disabilities may further limit their abilities.

Some officers offer expertise in certain areas, for instance British Sign Language or the use of electronic aids. Specialist support and training also includes:
- ASDAN courses for visually impaired students,
- A progressive course of basic cookery skills, Snack Attack, Munch Lunch and Ready to Cook,
- Moving on and Preparation for Adulthood courses,
- Sports and PE advice, movement balance and coordination programmes,
- Environmental Audits, Access for pupils with a visual impairment
- CPD for professionals,
- Advice on feeding, eating and drinking.

The Habilitation Service also offers an annual summer activity scheme for primary aged, visually impaired pupils, although this is always dependent on funding availability.

5. Code of Practice

Mobility training will usually be conducted on a one-to-one basis in a suitable environment. This environment will depend on the needs, age and attainment of the individual, in addition to its proximity to school or home any travel restrictions. Pupils may be taken to this location by car,
or may use public transport as part of their training. Staff should have
class 1 vehicle insurance (business use) and an appropriate child
restraint in order to transport children. Lesson duration will again vary
according to the need and attention span. During term time an individual
may be withdrawn from classes. Every effort is made not to withdraw
pupils unnecessarily from core or exam subjects but the exact timing of
individual lessons is subject to the availability of RQHS and discussions
with the school. The advent of the National Curriculum, Literacy Hour and
Numeracy Hour, have all put constraints on the availability of pupils, but
unfortunately the needs of all cannot be met outside these requirements.
The Team works Monday to Friday, all year round. Most staff are part
time, so may only be available certain days.

The Habilitation Service continues to operate throughout the school
holidays. Without the constraints of school timetables it is possible to
cover extensive routes, for instance to and from school or work
experience and for children to learn routes around their home area. The
Summer Activity Scheme and Lunch Clubs also operate in holiday time.

All equipment\(^6\) necessary to mobility training is provided by the Service
free of charge on long term loan. Certain equipment for subsequent
personal and home use may be provided to the child at the discretion of
the RQHS once the child has attained an acceptable level of proficiency
with the item. Information on other relevant equipment and suppliers may
also be offered to parents. Other specialist equipment can be offered to
parents or schools on short term loan\(^7\) whilst its usefulness for a particular
child is evaluated. Pupils are responsible for proper care of all equipment
issued and may be liable for damage stemming from inappropriate use.
There is no automatic right of replacement where reasonable care cannot
be demonstrated. Frequent damage to canes may result in a charge being
levied.

6. Behaviour Management

Mobility officers build special relationships with their pupils based largely
on trust. Conducting lessons on a one-to-one basis, in addition to
affording maximum security, allows the child greater licence to explore
experiences, enhance abilities and develop skills. The limits are therefore
very different from those imposed in the classroom or group situation and
all discipline is separate from events in the classroom.

Every effort is made to enhance social and interpersonal skills during the
course of mobility training. However, inappropriate behaviour cannot be

\(^6\) Equipment available on long term loan: symbol canes, long canes, cane tips, liquid level
indicators, torches

\(^7\) The Service has a range of items available for short term loan, a separate leaflet is available
 tolerated during lessons where it causes risk either to either to the child, the officer, or members of the public. In this event lessons will be suspended. The RQHS should be advised about children with emotional or behavioural difficulties so the programme can be moderated accordingly. Inappropriate behaviour may also be a limiting factor in the levels attained by any child.

In some cases children who are disruptive in class may thrive on the one-to-one relationships and exclusive attention, for others prolonged forays into the outside would may prove beyond their capabilities. The level of acceptable behaviour is not fixed. Without the potential for comparison between peers no set standard is required and a flexible approach can be applied. Development of social skills remains secondary to safety.

7. Safety/Safeguarding

The Habilitation Team are trained in all aspects of safeguarding, are expected to be aware of child protection issues and to tap into the reporting mechanisms of individual schools. Where this is not appropriate they can still feed directly into the MASH CASS system. The Team adheres to the majority of policies and procedures of Priestley Smith School, except where the role dictates otherwise.

All Habilitation Specialists and Assistants must be registered with Habilitation VIUK as RQHS. (Registered Qualified Habilitation specialist) As Mobility work is usually carried out on a 1:1 the RQHS must hold a current relevant first aid certificate and must carry a mobile phone. The Habilitation Team should also be trained in de-escalation strategies and Team Teach. RQHS may transport students to and from training in local areas. This requires full business insurance. Birmingham City Council, Health and Safety Policy decrees that employees should not answer mobile phones whilst driving. Some schools may insist on RQHS are accompanied by TAs. This can be accommodated but is not necessary and can adversely affect pupil responses.

All Habilitation staff have enhanced DBS clearance and have Priestley Smith School and Birmingham City Council ID badges. These should be carried at all times and schools or parents may ask to see them. Initial visits will be arranged directly with the preferred point of contact as named on the referral form, and confirmed in writing, together with general information about mobility.

Work will not be undertaken in areas or at times considered hazardous to the safety of either students or staff. A set of generic risk assessments have been undertaken for mobility training, independent travel and
habilitation and are included in the appendices together with lone working and an agreed procedure for action in the event of a ‘missing’ pupil.

8. Withdrawal

In the event of all appropriate strategies and procedures relating to compensating for their visual impairment having been completed with an individual, or the failure of that individual to comply with requirements, the Habilitation may decide to withdraw. This decision will be submitted to those involved in writing as a concluding report with an explanation. The Mobility Officer will discuss any such cases with the Senior Mobility Officer whose decision is final. Guidance on Starting and ending training can be found in the appendices.

9. Liaison

The Habilitation Specialist should liaise with parents and any involved professionals, advising and informing of aims and achievements and recommending appropriate strategies beneficial to the student. Parents, teachers and learning support assistants should be involved at all stages to ensure continuity of approach and reinforcement of procedures. The Specialist may be expected to attend case conferences where appropriate and will submit written reports to Pupil EHCPs when requested.

It is recognised that parents may be anxious about their child’s transition to independence. In order to alleviate these fears the RQHS should offer home visits to explain procedures and enable parents to observe their child on a lesson where necessary. It is important that the family is included and confidence engendered in the RQHS otherwise work may be seriously undermined. There are also a range of leaflets designed for parents and other professionals.

By prior arrangement the Habilitation Service can offer in service training to staff geared towards the specific needs of individual children or schools. An education package for sighted peers encouraging greater understanding of visual impairment is also available. These services are offered free of charge to Birmingham City Council Schools.

More detailed bespoke training is also available, but this is chargeable. Further information is available from the Senior Habilitation Specialist. This may include training to enable school staff to deliver movement or Life Skills programmes.

The Habilitation Service works closely with other visual impairment professionals and support services for the benefit of CYP. Representatives of the Service also regularly attend Habilitation VIUK
conferences (HabVIUK) and have links with a variety of specialist educational establishments including: the School of Rehabilitation Studies at the Birmingham City University (BCU); The Habilitation Top up degree at BCU; School of Education, Habilitation Course, at the London Institute of Education (IOE); Birmingham University QTVI VIMQ course, RNIB and Guide Dogs for the Blind, to keep abreast of new developments in the Habilitation fields.

10. Record Keeping

Clear attainable targets are set for pupils and day to day records are kept of mobility lessons to assist in the planning and delivery and in writing reports. These records are for internal consumption only. Progress may also be recorded by the use of videos or photography. Referring bodies and schools will be informed of progress via written reports at the initial, interim and concluding stages. In the case of long term involvement the RQHS should produce regular progress reports. Reports for EHCP reviews may replace one or more of these stage reports. The initial report will give information on the mobility assessment and make subsequent recommendations. A concluding report will be drawn up when the RQHS withdraws.

11. Enquiries and further information

Requests for further information should be addressed to the Senior Habilitation Specialist
Priestley Smith School
Perry Beeches Campus
Beeches Road
Great Barr
Birmingham B42 2 PY

Telephone: 0121 325 3904 email: mobility@priestley.bham.sch.uk

There is an administrative officer in the office every Tuesday and Thursday, and alternate Fridays term time only. At all other times there is an answer phone.

12. Grievances

In the event of a grievance or other dissatisfaction with the Habilitation Service, a complaint should be made in the first instance to the Senior Habilitation Specialist, as above. If satisfaction cannot be obtained at this level, appeal can be made to the Head of Service Miss H.C. Porter at the same address.
Appendices (not included in online document)

General “What is Mobility” leaflet
Mobility Syllabus
Curriculum Independent Living Skills
Current staff complement and management structure
Guidance on Habilitation involvement
Referral form
Forms sent out notifying school and parents of visit
Habilitation Working Procedures
Year 6 transition guidance
Individual Mobility Plan
Generic Risk Assessments
“Lost” child procedure
Lone working
Job descriptions