



Virtual School Sensory Support

Visual Stress (Meares Irlen Syndrome)

Visual stress is thought to be the most common visual reason for reading difficulties and describes unpleasant visual symptoms when viewing text, especially for long periods of time. Alternative names may be used to describe this condition including, **Meares-Irlen Syndrome, Irlen Syndrome** and **Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome**.

The prevalence of visual stress has been reported as occurring in 5 – 20% of the population (British Dyslexia Association 2012), many of which suffer unknowingly or may be misdiagnosed. In people with dyslexia this is thought to be higher at around 35-40% (Wilkins 2003).

It is not a diagnosed visual impairment or eye condition and is more like a Specific Learning Difficulty. Therefore, Virtual School Sensory Support is, from September 2017, only able to provide an assessment for Visual Stress as a Traded Service to education settings across Norfolk. For further information, please see below:

Definition of Visual Stress

Visual Stress (often referred to as Meares Irlen Syndrome) is thought to be a visual perception dysfunction caused by over sensitivity to certain visual stimuli. This sensitivity shows as symptoms of visual stress by causing problems when visual information is processed in the visual cortex. This area of the brain seems to become hyperexcited by the stimulus and some of the neurones in the brain misfire.

Children and Young People who are reported to have Visual Stress are not deemed to be visually impaired.

Referral

Referrals should be made using the Visual Stress/Meares Irlen referral form available from VSSS

<http://vsss.virtual-school.org.uk/professionals/referral>

VSSS will accept a referral from a family, school or setting to assess and advise on the individual support required.

Following receipt of a completed referral, VSSS will arrange a time and date with setting to carry out an assessment and produce a written report within five working days of the assessment taking place.



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Cost

The cost of an assessment, the report and verbal feedback to families, student and school staff will be £195.00 (September 2017 – July 2018).

Advice

Advice will consist of an assessment by a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TOVI) in the setting and a report outlining strategies to support learning and participation.

Parents/Carers need to ensure that the child/young person has been assessed by an Optometrist during the 12 months prior to the assessment taking place.

Further support

No further support will be offered from VSSS following the assessment and report.