



Introducing Health Sciences: Visual Impairment

Visual Impairment: Derek 's Story

Man

I first began to lose my sight when I was eighteen, and through a period of the next twelve years I went from partial sighted registration through to being totally blind at the age of twenty-nine, so I went through the whole range, and the impact of that I think was obviously quite traumatic. After I'd lost my sight I had to, as all people do who lose their sight completely, reassess the way in which I led my life, did my job and all those kind of things. You realise that actually almost everything you do is very difficult when you haven't got sight when you haven't been accustomed to that, so now obviously I'd had a bit of experience as my sight had been getting worse and worse over the previous years, but the key things were mobility and the ability to do those everyday tasks which we all take for granted, so making a cup of tea could be quite difficult initially when you've got boiling water in one hand and your mug in the other and, you know just as quick example, you soon learn to pour liquids over a draining board so if you do have an accident it doesn't matter. But going out without any mobility training is very scary and I didn't I used to rely on friends to take me out to begin with. I felt very trapped after my total sight loss and I did for a while experience quite a lot of difficulties in that obviously trying to get around in an outside environment, in the external environment, it can be very dangerous and very frightening because you don't know where you are, and I had a few falls down steps, and I got disorientated very quickly because I wasn't used to, my brain wasn't used to giving me those clues which I needed to be alert to, to make sure I got around properly and safely. And the answer to that, of course, lay in proper training.