

## Valuing and supporting Individuals

People who are blind or partially sighted often find themselves isolated from many social things that sighted people take for granted. Even in church they may feel left out and find their needs are not adequately addressed. Without sight they cannot read the church news, let alone the songbooks or those on the Power Point! Blind and partially sighted people find it too difficult to seek out friends and make new friendships.

## Aims

Creatively enabling blind and partially sighted people to explore and discover deeper personal relationships with Jesus and to find companionship and encouragement within Torch Fellowship Groups.

## Vision

The four principles we need to observe and practice when planning to start a Torch Fellowship Group:

- Christ-centered: that the Groups be Christ-centered in both expression and purpose, drawing people towards him.
- Church-linked: that every Group establish and maintain strong links with a diverse range of evangelically minded churches.
- Community-linked: that each Group establishes positive contact with blind

associations, Social Services, and those other organisations that serve blind people locally.

- Creatively led: Torch Fellowship Groups creatively and appropriately interact with blind and partially sighted people to develop friendships with each other.

## Meeting the need

This is where Torch Fellowship Groups fill a need. They are not an alternative to church but do provide an opportunity for social contact and friendship – visually impaired and sighted people together – but in a way where vision is not an issue. Most Groups have blind and partially sighted people in leadership; fully involved in planning and running the activities of the Group. Many people who are part of Torch Fellowship Groups feel a real sense of belonging and many describe them as a ‘lifeline’ to otherwise lonely lives.

## Getting Together

Typically a monthly meeting, usually a Saturday, is the main event in a Torch Fellowship Group calendar. However we are open to Groups being organised in a slightly different format. For example one Group meets on a Friday evening, another on a Thursday afternoon. The meetings are informal in style and the content will vary according to those who attend. Groups are open to all – whatever age – whether blind, or partially sighted – to those who consider themselves Christians and those who don’t.

## Getting Help

Torch has produced two handbooks that provide comprehensive help in starting and managing a TFG. Fresh Expressions Guidelines gives practical help in starting, running and managing a Group. New Avenue Resources provides lots of ideas, activities and resources that you can include within the Group meetings. Torch will provide all the help, resources and training that you need.

## In starting a new Group

The style of the new Group will largely depend upon the age of those who come, the team of helpers available and the culture of the local community.

An initial Prayer and Planning Group to seek for vision and direction.

Getting involved with blind and partially sighted people in the community.

Identifying key people to lead the Group.

Establish good links with churches, social services and blind associations.

Open a Building Society account.

Locating a suitable venue.

Recruiting sufficient helpers to assist with all the various roles.

Informing blind and partially sighted people via posters, Torch’s existing contacts, local press/radio.

Having established contact then visit blind and partially sighted people.

Set a date to launch the Group.

Leadership team to undergo visual awareness training.

Submit CRB checks.

## TEN STEPS TO LAUNCHING A NEW TORCH FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Step 1	Form a Prayer Group
	Contact HQ
	Read Handbooks
Step 2	Contact churches
	Form a Leadership Team
	Delegate responsibilities
Step 3	Include blind & partially sighted people
	Inter-denominational
	Find a suitable venue
Step 4	Get CRB checks done
	Partnership Agreement/ Constitution
Step 5	Open Bank Account
Step 6	Formulate vision/strategy
Step 7	Research residential homes
	Visit blind clubs/Associations
Step 8	Fix a date for opening
	Advertise where blind and partially sighted people get their local news
	Promote among local churches
Step 9	Organise the programme
	Invite guests
Step 10	Launch Torch Fellowship Group
	Continue to meet regularly as a Prayer Group
	Undertake Visual Awareness Training

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.”*

*John 15:16 (NIV)*

For further information please contact **David Palmer** at Torch House.  
**E-mail:** davidp@torchtrust.org

Torch House, Torch Way, Northampton Road  
Market Harborough, Leics. LE16 9HL, UK  
Tel: 01858 438260 Fax: 01858 438275  
Email: info@torchtrust.org  
Website: www.torchtrust.org  
Registered Charity No. 1095904



Starting  
a Torch  
Fellowship  
Group

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**TORCH**  
vision for people  
with sight loss