



Out of Pocket

How the cost of living crisis is impacting families with a vision impaired child

Families with a child with a vision impairment are being hit particularly hard by the cost of living crisis. Resulting in parents' mental health suffering as they're forced to make difficult decisions and cutbacks.

Higher costs arise from being forced to use their car more frequently, using more energy at home and buying specialist equipment. Many of the pressures on household incomes are exacerbated by their child's needs not being fully met by local health and education agencies, and local transport not being accessible. Only a fifth of families told us their benefits are sufficient to cover the extra costs associated with their child's disability.

Guide Dogs is calling for the Government to take action to support families by increasing support by £15 per month for families with a disabled child receiving Universal Credit or Child Tax Credits.



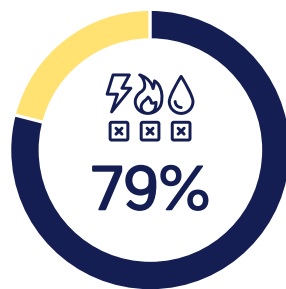
How the cost of living crisis is impacting on families with a child with vision impairment

Guide Dogs commissioned research to understand the impact that the cost of living crisis is having on families with a child with vision impairment. In December 2022 we ran a survey to compare the impact of the crisis on families with a vision impaired child to those families with non-disabled children¹.

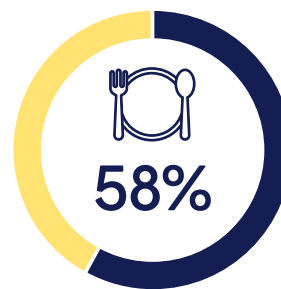
The survey found that:



The majority of British families face some levels of difficulties to make ends meet and families with a vision impaired child are even more affected, with **80% claiming they have less disposable income than a year ago.**



4 out of 5 (79%) families with a vision impaired child are **concerned about their ability to pay energy and utility bills.**



58% of families with a vision impaired child are **concerned about being able to put food on the table.**



1 in 10 (11%) families with a vision impaired child surveyed had to **access a food bank**



1. Survey was run by Insight Angels. Participants included 199 parent/guardians of at least one child with a vision impairment aged 18 years or younger. Their experiences were compared to 156 parent/guardians of a child aged 18 years or younger. Participants from across the UK took part. **[BACK]**

Why is the cost of living crisis affecting families with a vision impaired child so badly?

Families with a vision impaired child face many additional costs to meet their child's needs. Whilst most families are accessing related benefits, only a fifth say these benefits are sufficient to cover the extra costs incurred.

Some of the additional costs that families encounter include:

Energy

Families with a child with a vision impairment are often more dependent on heating and electricity due to their child's needs. 50% of children with a vision impairment have an additional disability or health condition, many of which require the ongoing use of electricity for example for running medical equipment, heating the house, additional washing and having their house well-lit to ensure their home is accessible to their child.

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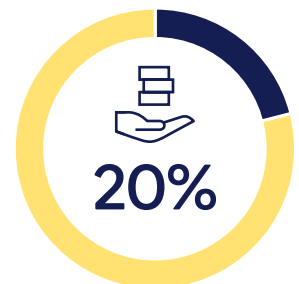
We have to keep lights on longer in the winter so he can see the stairs and the hallway etc and the heating on as his muscles hurt more in the winter so he can't get cold

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He is unable to regulate his temperature so in the winter we have to have the heating on more and in the summer the fans are used more. Also due to him having chorioretinopathy the lights are kept on more in the winter even in the day when overcast as he struggles to see. Approximate cost per year would be an extra £400

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Whilst most families are accessing related benefits, only a fifth say these benefits are sufficient to cover the extra costs incurred



of children with a vision impairment have an additional disability or health condition

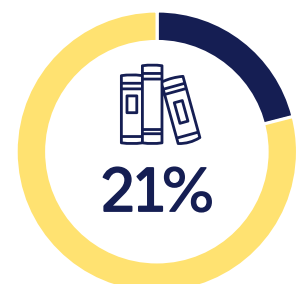




Accessing education

Children with vision impairment are more likely to be involved in activities outside of school, such as swimming, music/art classes and youth clubs. The activities run in schools are often inaccessible for children with a vision impairment² and so parents are having to seek out accessible alternatives. These activities are generally paid for by families. Families with a child with a vision impairment pay on average £336 per year for these activities compared to £160 for families with a non-disabled child.

Additionally, families with a vision impairment are having to pay to enable their child to access their education, which should be provided through the school. 21% of families with a child with a vision impairment were having to pay over £500 a year on things such as one-to-one support, books and equipment. 55% of families reported that these costs have increased in the past year. Schools need to ensure they are meeting their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 by making access to learning, including extra-curricular activities, accessible to vision impaired pupils.



of families with a child with a vision impairment pay over £500 a year for educational support and equipment



of families reported that these costs have increased in the past year

1. See Guide Dogs response to SEND Review 2022 [\[BACK\]](#)

Car usage

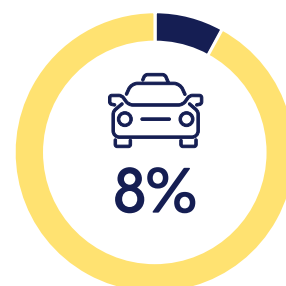
Cars are vital for families with a child with a vision impairment. Families reported travelling significantly further to attend education and appointments. 8% of families with a vision impaired child³ are paying more than £100 per month on transport to school, 76% of respondents reported that is more than a year ago. Furthermore, families told us that many forms of public transport are inaccessible for their vision impaired child. Guide Dogs has long campaigned to make transport more accessible to people with a vision impairment. We have been frustrated at the slow pace of change on many aspects of the Inclusive Transport Strategy. The toll of inaccessible transport is being exaggerated in this cost of living crisis. The Government needs to act now to create an accessible transport system to all.

To reduce fuel costs families with a child with a vision impairment are no longer travelling to non-necessary events including half of families reducing socialising.

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We have to take to and from school each day due to local school transport being inaccessible and unreliable we don't get anything back despite our child being eligible

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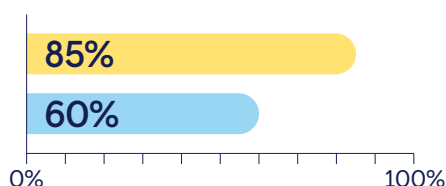


of families with a vision impaired child are paying more than £100 per month on transport to school

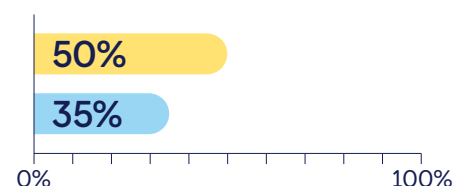


of families have reduced socialising

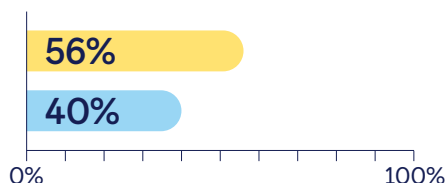
Travelling to medical appointments by car



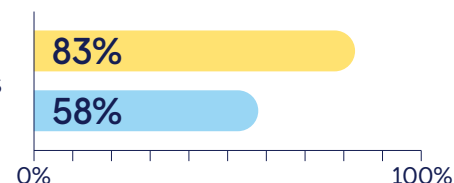
Travelling to youth /interest groups by car



Travelling to sports activities by car



Travelling to leisure activities by car



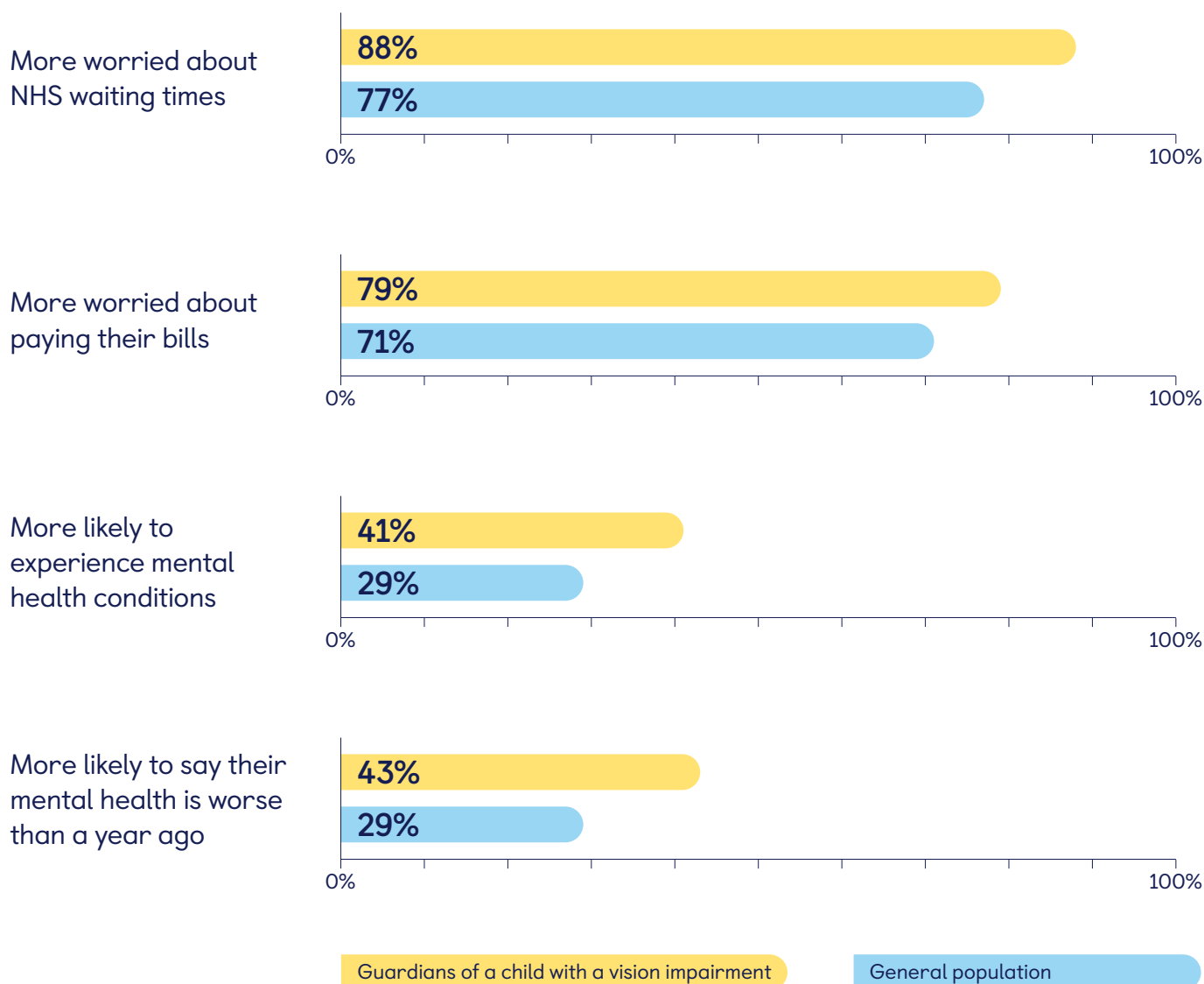
Guardians of a child with a vision impairment

General population

1. Compared to 3% of families with a non-disabled child [BACK]

The impact on parents

Many families are having to make tough decisions about where to save money. Guardians of a child with a vision impairment reported that they are cutting back on spend which relates to their health and wellbeing. This is coupled with being more worried than the general population about issues such as NHS waiting times (88% of families reported being concerned compared to 77% of general population) and paying their bills (79% compared to 71% of general population). As a result, parents with a vision impaired child are significantly more likely to have experienced mental health conditions in the past year (41% compared to 29% of general population sample) and they are significantly more likely to say their mental health is worse than a year ago (43% compared to 29% of general population).



How can families with a child with vision impairment be supported through the cost of living crisis and beyond?

1



Families with a child with a vision impairment are experiencing significant financial hardship today. **We're calling for £15 per month for families with a child with sight loss receiving Universal Credit or Child Tax Credits.** We're also supporting RNIB in their calls on measures to support adults living with vision impairments.

2



Many of the financial costs that families are facing come from systems that are not supporting and including children with a vision impairment in the way they should. This forces families to travel further to schools and medical appointments and pay for provision that should be provided by schools. To overcome these challenges we recommend that the Government:

3



- Ask the Equality Commission to create statutory guidance outlining schools' duties to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with a disability to reduce parents need to pay additional costs to ensure their child can access a full education
- Prioritise progressing the Inclusive Transport Strategy to make transport accessible to all and reduce families reliance on their cars



For more information regarding this briefing please contact Helen Honstvet on campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk