

Tips for Facilities Managers to support blind or partially sighted people during COVID-19

This guide has been written by blind and partially sighted people working with Sight Loss Councils.

- 1. Be aware:** Not all blind and partially sighted people “look blind” (wear dark glasses, use a cane or a guide dog), so be mindful that it may not always be obvious. They may however be wearing a Sunflower badge or a lanyard so that they can be easily recognised as someone requiring assistance. Customers with visual impairment will require more verbal information than others so please be clear and accurate when communicating.
- 2. Guiding:** If someone usually requires ‘traditional’ guiding in public areas and there is no safe alternative, they will need to be guided. Therefore, single use face masks and hand sanitisers should be made available. If the customer is being accompanied, ask if the person with them is their usual means of support and advise them of hygiene procedures. You can find more information on guiding on the RNIB website: www.rnib.org.uk/advice/guiding-blind-or-partially-sighted-person
- 3. Social distancing:** Many blind and partially sighted people will find it difficult to maintain social distancing, so keep this in mind. If you are in an office space and you are aware that visually impaired people are working in the building, it may help to announce where you are and make sure you keep the required distance.
- 4. Introduce yourself:** If you think that someone needs help, introduce yourself, as customers may not see your uniform or badge - a simple “Hi I’m Steve, I work in the Finance department, is there anything I can do to help today?” can go a long way.
- 5. Hygiene:** To keep everyone safe, please highlight to your blind and partially sighted colleagues where they can wash or sterilise their hands - don’t assume everyone knows where it is.

6. Changes to the environment: Make sure blind and partially sighted colleagues are aware of changes within the office environments such as floor indicators, blocked off desks, screens and temporary barriers. Ensure any temporary signage is at least size 48 point font – hand-written notes are difficult for everyone to read so where you can, verbalise these changes to the colleague. Where markers and arrows showing a one-way route are installed, please make sure to use high contrast colours (e.g. black and yellow), as this will help your employees with visual impairment.

