

Tips for shops and service settings 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. Make sure communication via a public address system is clear and concise.
- 2. Guiding:** If someone usually requires ‘traditional’ guiding in public areas and there is no safe alternative, they will need to be guided. 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 when you’re on duty. Verbal and/or physical assistance may be required with queueing and getting around.
- 4. Introduce yourself:** If you think someone needs help, introduce yourself, as customers may not see your uniform or badge - a simple “Hi I’m Sue, I am a shop assistant here, 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 customers where they can wash or sterilise their hands - don’t assume everyone knows where it is.

6. Changes to the environment: Make sure your blind and partially sighted customers are aware of changes within the shop environment, such as floor indicators, 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 customer. Also use high contrast colours such as black and white or black and yellow to mark the floor, especially where a one-way route exists. Make sure arrows are clearly visible.

7. Rules on touching items: Many shops have introduced the rule that a customer must not touch any item unless they are considering purchasing it. This is especially difficult for blind and partially sighted people. To allow for this, make sure there is hand sanitiser available at the shop entrance, and sanitise the touched item if you are assisting a visually impaired customer. A detailed verbal description of the item may help to avoid excessive touching.