# Getting around London with visual impairment: transcript

## Subtitle: This is Hugh from RNIB

Hugh: I’ve been working with RNIB on Inclusive Journeys, which means getting around if you can’t see. If you are visually impaired, then getting around is one of your everyday challenges. It’s just natural it’s going to be, because you can’t see where obstacles are and where bus stops are. And these challenges are made worse by things not being well designed, or the streets being disorganised and not properly maintained.

I’m always really aware that I’m not that normal person out there, I’m someone who’s got a difference, I’ve got a visual impairment. And I think the thing that, everyday I’m struck with is that, if you feel different, then people often treat you differently.

## Subtitle: Positives

Hugh: There’s amazing things out there now. It’s about tactile paving, it’s that bumpy, textured paving you get right at the end of a road junction, and I’m empowered by the environment to know where things are. And therefore, I can make a judgement about where to stand.

Well, the amazing thing about buses in London is they talk now, and that has been the biggest improvement to me getting around London. Talking buses, I know when the bus stops are coming now, I know which route number it is, that’s amazing.

## Subtitle: Negatives

Hugh: Dockless bikes, they’ve come about in the last few years and it started with the odd dockless bike. I didn’t even know they were dockless bikes. If you can’t see, you can’t see the brand name on them.

[Hugh next to three dockless bikes lying on the pavement]

Hugh: “Some of them have fallen over?”

RNIB team member: “Yeah they’re all lying down”

Hugh: If you’re using a cane like me, you don’t always catch it with your cane, it can sometimes go through the spokes or there’s a leg sticking out. You know how they prop them up on the leg, a retractable leg? The leg can get caught in your foot, and you might miss it with your cane. These are not nice things to walk into.

One of the other things that I come across all the time now, it’s a pavement, but it turns into a road, and it’s completely flat, or it’s almost flat. So as you’re walking, the tip of my white cane rolls over it, and the only way I know I’m in a road, is if a bike or a car is right next to me, or beeps at me. It feels horrible. Because if you imagine, if you can see, you probably can’t imagine this situation where you suddenly are not where you thought you were. And we probably don’t all realise how much we’re checking our environment.

[Hugh at a cycle track on a pavement, which runs behind a bus stop and bypasses it]

Hugh: I think I’m standing on a pavement, I can’t be sure, it feels like it, and there’s a cycleway right by me. But I only know that, because someone who can see has told me that. Because there is nothing at all, to tell by touch, that you’ve moved. So there’s a wall there, I could feel, I could hear it. But to get to the bus stop, apparently I go over a cycle track.

It just shows how it takes one, my stick moves quick, I have to move it quick to know where I am. It only takes a cyclist who doesn’t see the tip of my stick, or doesn’t expect it to do that, to go straight through the fork. So this design is just an accident waiting to happen.

Look at that cyclist, are they going slow? I mean, I only heard that cyclist when it was [Hugh clicks his fingers next to himself over the cycle track] just right there. There was just no way I would have been able to avoid them.

There isn’t really any such thing as a normal person, everyone on the street is different. And I’m just normal, because I’m different. Everyone’s different. But getting that across to designers and to local authorities and planners that actually, you need to build for diversity, it’s a big challenge. It doesn’t happen automatically happen unless someone is actually gunning for it, and that’s what I do.

Transcript ends.