# Providing Training Courses for blind and partially sighted people

## About this factsheet

This factsheet contains information on how to meet the needs of blind and partially sighted participants on training courses you may be organising.

This factsheet is part of a series of factsheets for employers and employment professionals. At the end you will find the full list, and details of where to find them.

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## General guidance for trainers

If possible, the tutor should contact a blind or partially sighted participant prior to the event to ascertain what their specific needs are. If prior contact is not possible, at the start of the course the tutor should establish their specific needs and preferred format of communication.

The tutor should not make assumptions about blind and partially sighted participants' needs. These may vary considerably from person to person. The tutor should always ask the individual directly.

Questions about visual media should be specific rather than open. For example, “Can you read what is on the flipchart?” rather than “What can you see?”

During initial ‘ice breakers’, all participants should be asked to introduce themselves by name. Name plates or badges are not a substitute for verbal introductions if they cannot be read by partially sighted participants.

Address blind and partially sighted participants by name to avoid any confusion.

Tutors often use non-verbal signals during training sessions, for example to indicate approval or invite discussion or comment. This should be backed up by some verbal communication to ensure that blind and partially sighted participants are not excluded.

Reception staff should be advised that blind or partially sighted participants may need assistance with completing security entry procedures and assistance with locating the training room.

## Facilitator led events

These sessions may involve the use of a variety of training methods, which would need to be adapted to ensure that blind and partially sighted participants are able to participate fully.

### Handout material

All pre-prepared handout materials should be available in a person's preferred reading format. It can be helpful for some participants if certain handouts and materials are forwarded to them prior to the course. This may help to cut down the amount of reading time needed during the course discussions or exercises.

### Use of visual aids (e.g. PowerPoint presentations, OHPs and flipcharts)

When indicating items on a flipchart or overhead slide, tutors should specify what is being referred to, avoiding vague references like “this” or “next one”. Tutors should comment when they are changing slides.

Tutors should use black, broad tipped pens on flipcharts. Writing should be large and bold for maximum clarity and contrast. RNIB recommend that white flipchart paper is used. Where flipcharts are used for recording points in a discussion, the tutor should read out what they are writing. The tutor should also recap what is on the flipchart at the end of the session or when moving to a new flipchart sheet. Remember, blind and partially sighted participants will hear what you are doing and will feel excluded if you do not explain what you are doing. Care should be taken to describe any diagrams, models or tables that are being displayed.

All pre-prepared flipcharts or overhead slides should be made available to participants in their preferred format. (They should still be read out by the tutor during the presentation.)

Some whiteboards are difficult to see because of glare. Where possible tutors should try to reduce glare by switching off unnecessary lighting or by drawing blinds.

### Use of video

Tutors should be sufficiently familiar with any training videos they are showing to be able to describe the setting and characters to blind and partially sighted participants, so that they do not miss essential visual information. Ideally the tutor should supply a pre-prepared synopsis as a guide for blind and partially sighted participants.

### Group / role play / syndicate activities

Activities should be reviewed so that where possible they do not place any participants at a disadvantage, for example observing facial expression or body language.

For overtly visual activities, the tutor should explore options for these to be described verbally. The tutor could do this or arrange for a second tutor or a support worker. It is usually not appropriate to ask other participants to act as a support worker. The tutor should discuss and agree with the participant what their preference is before making arrangements.

## Open learning packs or course materials

Open learning packs should be provided to the participants in their preferred format. Details of preferred format should be obtained well in advance of the course so that there is adequate time to prepare materials.

Tutors may need to allow extra time for blind and partially sighted participants to read and assimilate the information. It may be advisable to send course materials to participants in advance and arrange for additional training days before the event.

### Clear print and large print

Clear print will make text accessible to a wide group of people. RNIB recommend a 14-point, non-serif font such as Arial.

The layout should be simple and logical. Patterned or coloured paper should be avoided as this reduces print contrast. More information on clear print guidelines can be obtained from UK Association of Accessible Formats: [**ukaaf.org/**](https://www.ukaaf.org/)

Participants should be advised that they can bring low vision equipment with them, and arrangements made to facilitate this. For example, it may be useful to provide a trolley for a desktop video magnifier so that it can be moved to different training rooms for syndicate work or private study. On occasions it may be appropriate to hire equipment on loan for the training period.

### Audio recordings

Audio recordings are useful for longer documents, as it can be quicker than reading large print or braille.

Electronic format may be preferred by people who use access technology software. The format of the documents would need to be compatible with standard magnification and screen reading software. A laptop computer could also be used for note-taking during training.

It may also be necessary to change the presentation of tabular information or organisation charts so that it is easier to follow. For example, an organisation chart could be represented by stating each job title and listing each person who holds that post.

Diagrams, graphs, photographs or pictures should be described.

It is also helpful to number paragraphs and provide a contents section to assist the reader in navigating the document.

### Braille

RNIB provide a transcription service for producing braille documents. More information at [**rnib.org.uk/rnib-business/transcription-services**](https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnib-business/transcription-services)

Electronic braille displays provide a simple method of reading electronic documents on a laptop or mobile device.

## Note-taking

Blind and partially sighted participants may need to use special equipment for note-taking. Participants should be advised that they should bring with them their own note-taking equipment e.g., electronic note-taker, Brailler, laptop computer.

Tutors should indicate when handouts are already available, and these should be provided in the participant's preferred format.

Tutors should allow sufficient time for blind and partially sighted participants to take notes.

## Training environment

It can be helpful if the tutor describes the layout of the training room and the location of the doors. The tutor should check whether lighting levels are suitable for participants and make adjustments as necessary. Participants should be invited to move away or towards windows, or nearer to visual aids if this would be helpful to them.

Safety should be a primary concern. Tutors should ensure that the room is kept free of clutter and obstacles. Blind participants should be offered a guide to navigate unfamiliar surroundings, and informed of any changes to the room layout, for example during syndicate exercises.

## Access to refreshments and other facilities

If refreshments are provided, some blind and partially sighted participants may need assistance to know what is available and to access a buffet or self-service selection.

## Sources of help and further information

This section details some sources of help and lists organisations that can provide further information.

### RNIB

#### Employment services for employers

We can help you retain a current employee who is losing their sight, and we can help you to take on someone who is blind or partially sighted.

Advances in technology mean that visually impaired people can now overcome many of the barriers to work that they faced in the past, and government schemes like Access to Work mean that many of the costs can be met.

We provide a number of services that can be directly commissioned by employers.

For further information about any of these services, please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

#### Guide to employing blind and partially sighted people

Our ‘Guide to employing blind and partially sighted people’ has been designed to address common concerns and to set out the benefits of employing a blind or partially sighted person. It covers everything you need to know about employing someone with sight loss, from the recruitment and interview process, to making sure an employee has the right equipment in place to carry out their role. It is available at

[**rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person**](https://www.rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person)

In addition to this you may like to look at our 'Employment Case studies' which showcase employers, employment professionals and people with sight loss who have used some of the services available to help, as well as our resources to help you retain your staff who may be losing their sight.

‘Employment case studies’ can be found at

[**rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person/employment-case-studies**](https://www.rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person/employment-case-studies)

Retention resources can be found at

[**rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person/business-case-job-retention**](https://www.rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person/business-case-job-retention)

#### Employment factsheets

We have a range of factsheets for employers and employment professionals.

All our factsheets can be found in the Employing a blind or partially sighted person section of our website: [**rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person**](https://www.rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person)

We also produce a number of factsheets aimed at blind and partially sighted people, on a range of employment related issues. These can be found at [**rnib.org.uk/advice/equality-rights-employment**](https://www.rnib.org.uk/advice/equality-rights-employment)

#### RNIB Helpline

The RNIB Helpline can refer you to an employment specialist for further advice and guidance. RNIB Helpline can also help you by providing information and advice on a range of topics, such as eye health, the latest products, leisure opportunities, benefits advice and emotional support.

Call the Helpline team on **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

### Access to Work

Access to Work is a scheme run by Jobcentre Plus. The scheme provides advice, grant funding, and practical support to disabled people and employers to help overcome work related obstacles resulting from a disability. To learn more about qualifying for the scheme, read our Access to Work factsheet, or visit the Access to Work section at

[**rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person/access-work**](https://www.rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses/employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person/access-work)

Further details are also available at [**gov.uk/access-to-work**](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

### Guide Dogs

The best place to find out information relating to guide dogs. Visit:

[**guidedogs.org.uk/**](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/)

### The Health and Safety Executive

HSE is responsible for enforcing health and safety at workplaces.

[**hse.gov.uk/**](https://www.hse.gov.uk/)

### Equality and Human Rights Commission

The Equality and Human Rights commission (EHRC) have a statutory remit to promote and monitor human rights; and to protect, enforce and promote equality across the nine "protected" grounds - age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. The website includes a section on employment.

EHRC website homepage:

[**equalityhumanrights.com/en**](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en)

The EHRC has information about disability in employment which can be found at:

[**equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance**](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance)

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