

Covid-19: Supporting your blind and partially sighted members and participants

Sports and leisure sector guidance

In partnership with



A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE THROUGH SPORT



MetroBlindSport

Introduction

As the lockdown risk is managed, we want to support your staff in helping members in “vulnerable situations” by offering some simple guidance to complement your efforts. This will not only support your customers with sight loss but help to dramatically improve the overall customer experience.

Everyone sees differently. This ranges from people with perfect sight (or so-called ‘20/20 vision’) to those who see darkness or nothing at all. That said, 93 per cent of people who are registered blind or partially sighted can see something, which can come as a surprise to the general public.



Information

As sports and leisure environments adapt to the situation, providing up-to-date information about any provisions being put in place is key. It is important to share what physical changes you are making within these environments, as well as policy changes. This could include floor indicators, protective screens, temporary signage, priority opening times, restrictions on equipment or facilities and changes to facility layouts. Not everyone will be able to see these, so try to highlight this information across your channels to help prepare your members.

If there is temporary signage displayed to advise on facility layout, policy changes or opening times, try to ensure that the smallest print used is in at least size 14 font – handwritten notes can be difficult for everyone to read. But, where you can, verbalise these changes to your users and offer to go through the changes in detail with any blind and partially sighted members.

Visual indicators and awareness

It's important to remember that blind and partially sighted people don't necessarily "look blind". Not all blind and partially sighted people wear dark glasses, have a cane or a guide dog, so be mindful that sight loss may not always be obvious. If you think that someone might require assistance or they have a visual indicator (**which includes wearing the sunflower lanyard or social distancing indicator**), a simple introduction and "Is there anything I can assist you with?", can go a long way.

Social distancing Research carried out by RNIB found that almost two thirds of blind or partially sighted people say they've found maintaining a social distance difficult – guide dogs are amazing animals, but they are unaware that social distancing is in force.

Potential announcements such as: "Please maintain your social distance and consider others around you." could help to support all your members.

For more information on the challenges of social distancing, please refer to RNIB's short video: '**How to socially distance when this is your view**'

Staff Introduce yourself as customers may not see your uniform/ name tag – "Hi I'm Steve, I'm your Duty Manager, is there anything I can do to help today?"

For more information on how to interact with your blind and partially sighted customers, please refer to RNIB's "Helping you to help your customers" resource.

**Hi I'm Steve,
how can
I help?**



Inside the facility and customer experience

Guiding

Our research shows that 48% of blind or partially sighted people are concerned or anxious about following social distancing guidance correctly. Providing sighted guiding for someone who is blind or partially sighted is still possible to do safely by following the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) "Supporting people outside their home" (bit.ly/3kekkLC) guidance and our own RNIB sighted guiding guidance (bit.ly/2ZD3Wwf).

Staff or volunteers providing sighted guiding, as well as following the gov's working safely during coronavirus (<https://bit.ly/2DX7rpE>) and your own organisation's policies, should be mindful how to obtain records of the people who will be supported in an accessible manner for NHS Test and Trace proposes. If it is not deemed safe to adhere to social distancing measures, verbal guiding may have to be considered.

More information on guiding on the RNIB website: [rnib.org.uk/advice/guiding-blind-or-partially-sighted-person](https://www.rnib.org.uk/advice/guiding-blind-or-partially-sighted-person)

Colour contrast

Be mindful of the visual appearance of any temporary signage, ensuring there is clear colour contrast – otherwise blind and partially sighted customers may not be able to read them. Also, try to add this same logic to any online content you create.

Tactile markers and audio announcements

We support the use of safe tactile indicators or markers and audible announcements to provide your members with information in non-visual formats. For example, using tactile floor markers to identify one-way systems in changing rooms.

Flexibility for guides

We understand that facilities will request that people workout by themselves or socially distance while participating in different activities. It is now possible for people who are blind or partially sighted to be supported in accordance with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) "Supporting people outside their home" (bit.ly/3kekkLC) together with your own supporting organisational policies.

Hygiene

For many blind and partially sighted members, identifying equipment can be a difficult and extremely tactile process. To maintain the required level of hygiene, specifically highlight to your blind and partially sighted members where and how they can sterilise their hands, equipment and any other facilities they may use.

Protective screens

With the installation of protective screens within your facilities, it's important to ensure there is good contrast, so they don't create unnecessary confusion. This can be as simple as putting tape around the edge of the screen and payment terminal location.

Innovative accessible solutions

We know that many sport and leisure environments are exploring how to better support their customers with innovative ways of delivering experiences, such as online exercise classes and use of smart devices. We support the use of technology in achieving safe engagement.

Online, social media and video content

With the ever-changing landscape, it's vital that we maintain the accessibility of websites, apps, social and all other media content. Good practices can easily be broken in a time of change, resulting in customers being excluded from important information and updates. Remember, maintaining accessibility can be the difference between successfully completing the task or not; for example signing up and booking your gym session.

When making video content, it is also key to consider that the narrative doesn't rely on the visuals within your content. So, if you create a video, try and see if you can get all of the information just by listening.

**Find advice on accessible information
on RNIB's website.**



RNIB Business Services

RNIB Business Services work with key partners to deliver inclusive, accessible and usable solutions for blind and partially sighted people. The commercial services we provide to our clients are delivered on a for-profit basis and these profits are then used to help fund our charitable activities.

We support industry sectors with consultancy and business as usual services; such as fulfilment of alternative format transcription through our state of the art, secure facility. This engagement ranges from financial services, travel and transport, retail, leisure and health sectors. We can assist with evaluations on the accessibility of websites and apps, documents, products, ensuring an accessible more inclusive customer experience.

If you would like more information, email our team at BusinessLink@rnib.org.uk or call **01733 375370**

For more information,
please visit:

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