

Covid-19: Supporting your blind and partially sighted passengers

Buses and Concessionary Transport Best Practice guidance



Introduction

As the lockdown risk is managed, we want to support your staff in helping passengers that find themselves in “vulnerable situations” by offering some simple guidance to complement your efforts. This will not only support your passengers 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 the use of public transport increases, 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 to your service, as well as policy changes, so that passengers have some idea of what to expect on the ground and within a vehicle. This could include floor and seat indicators, protective screens, temporary signage, changes to booking and ticket processes and changes to layouts/one-way systems. Not everyone will be able to see these, so try to include this information across your channels.

If there is temporary signage displayed to advise on layout or restrictions, policy changes or restricted services, try to ensure that the smallest print used is in at least size 14 font – hand-written notes can be difficult for everyone to read. But, where you can, verbalise these changes to your passengers on arrival.

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 it 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 be a huge help.

Social distancing From our research, we 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 place. Please keep this in mind when endorsing social distancing within your service.

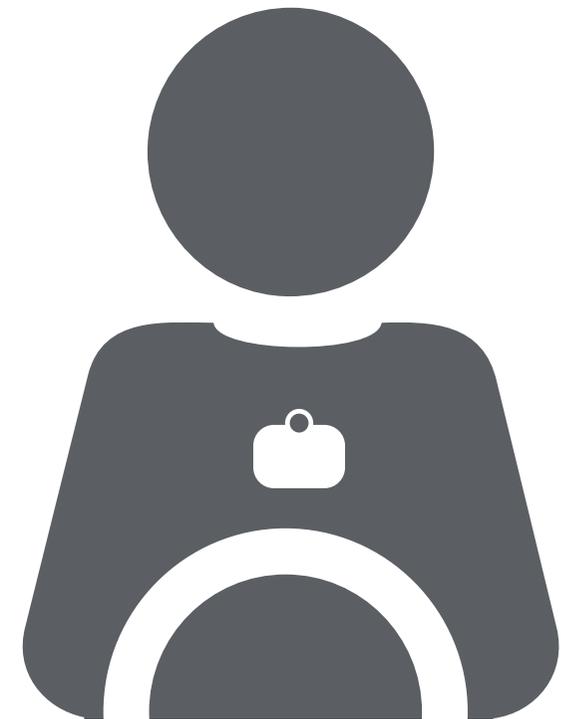
Customer facing staff Introduce yourself as passengers may not see your uniform/name tag. For example, "Hi I'm Steve, the station manager, is there anything I can help you with today" can go a long way. Also, it is key at this point to verbally highlight any changes in policy or environment in case your passengers can't see them.

As many services are now operating with restrictions, in addition to your introduction, try to remember to describe any restrictions and layout changes that might be applicable for instance: "Due to the one way system

now in operation, you will need to queue on the right keeping the temporary barrier on your right, the driver will introduce him/herself to you"

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

Hi I'm Steve, your driver, how can I help?



In-vehicle and passenger experience

Many services will have been required to restrict passenger capacity within vehicles, as such where applicable, in addition to your introduction, try to remember to describe any layout changes that might be applicable for instance: "restricted seats have a plastic sash around the seat backs, I can see a priority seat is available two rows back on the left nearest the window"

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/3kekLC) 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 (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

Colour contrast

When creating temporary signage, please be mindful of how these appear with your interior lighting conditions and ensure there is clear colour contrast – as otherwise blind and partially sighted customers may not be able to read it. 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 passengers with information in non-visual forms. For example, using tactile floor markers when queuing within a bus station or stop and tactile seat restriction indicators to help maintain social distancing requirements.

Hygiene

On arrival at the bus station or where applicable on the bus, please highlight to your blind and partially sighted passengers any hygiene measures that are in place and where they can sterilise their hands as these may not always be obvious.

Protective screens

With the installation of protective screens, 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.

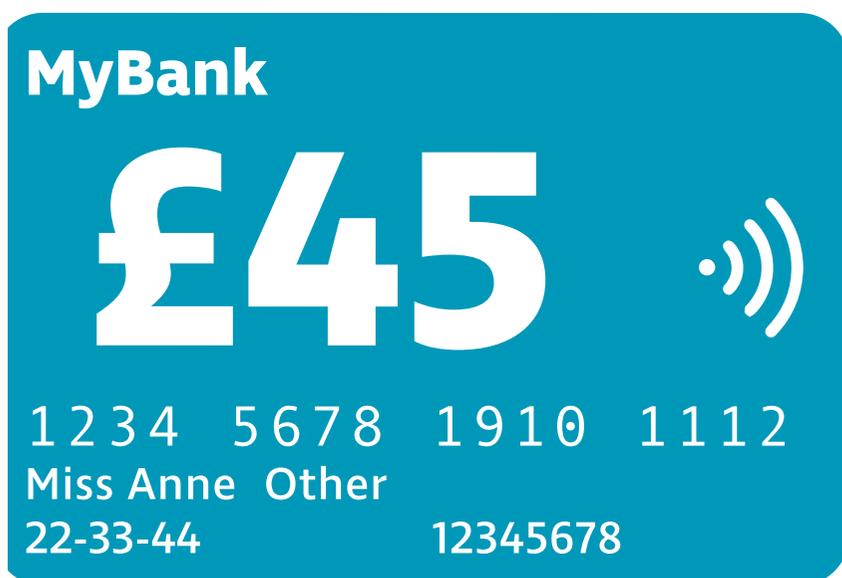
Payment

We support the use of contactless payment and the increased £45 limit, along with the smart device payments. However, for those that need to use cash, be aware that this may be the only form of payment that is suitable for them at this time.

Innovative accessible solutions

We know that many operators are exploring how to better support their passengers with innovative ways of interacting and delivering information; such as the ability to plan and pay for their journey. We support the use of technology in achieving this and we are here to help you maintain the accessibility and inclusive nature of any solution.

For more information on how we can support you, please email BusinessLink@rnib.org.uk



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. In a time of change, good practices can easily be broken; resulting in passengers being excluded from important information and updates.

Remember, maintaining accessibility can be the difference between successfully travelling or not.

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

Find advice on accessible information on our website at:
<https://t.co/5DN8rzlY6x?amp=1>



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 information on all our services, visit our Business Services section of our website or email our team at **BusinessLink@rnib.org.uk** or call **01733 375370**

For more information, please visit:

rnib.org.uk

Standing with you

through every

challenge