

A photograph of a row of blue chairs with silver metal frames, arranged in a waiting area. The chairs are lined up against a light-colored wooden wall. A red fire extinguisher is visible on the wall to the left. The floor is a light-colored, speckled material.

Top tips for healthcare professionals

Accessing care:
The physical environment
January 2014



supporting blind and
partially sighted people

Simple steps that you can take to ensure that, as someone with sight loss, I can navigate care settings as independently as possible

These “tips” have been compiled from information and suggestions gathered from RNIB supporters as well as existing RNIB guidance.

Use colour contrast in the interior design to help me make the most of my low vision and stay safe

Entrances

- Have clear, large print colour contrast signage leading from the door to the reception desk so that people can more easily find help when they arrive.
- Ensure glass doors have high contrast markings on them to make them more visible.
- Meet-and-greet volunteers can be an invaluable help to people with sight loss to make sure I get to the right department without getting lost.
- There should be a clear pedestrian walkway through the car park.

Doorways

- Doors and/or doorframe colour should contrast with the surrounding environment.

Stairways

- Stair treads should be highlighted with high visibility nosing to help me make out the edge of the steps. This includes steps and stairs outside of the building.

Furniture and other equipment

- Furniture should contrast in colour to the surrounding environment.
- Plates, cups and other utensils should contrast in colour to the surrounding environment (i.e. the tray and bedside table).

Make sure signage and way-finding is clear, bold and has large print lettering to give me the best chance of being able to use it

- Make sure font size is large, lower case, left aligned and in a clear colour contrast (for example, black on white) so that people with sight loss have the best chance possible of being able to read it. Braille can be useful for some people, particularly if signage is put in the same place in every room.
- Using colour coordinated signage or high visibility symbols can help people access information when they can't see the text.
- Bright colour contrasted lines on the floor can help people navigate to key departments.
- Signage should be in a consistent place in the room so that people don't have to search for it.
- Signs on doorways need to be positioned at eye level and not too high up to enable people to view them up close.
- Use colour contrasted guide rails to help people get around, and make sure that they are not blocked by chairs or other obstacles.
- Make sure the W.C. is clearly marked for "male" and "female" with large print signage and large text with tactile features so that people can more easily find their way to the correct bathroom.

Ensure adequate lighting to help maximise my vision

- Make sure lighting is consistent where possible as changing from different lighting conditions affects people with low vision.
- Make sure floor coverings are matt or carpet finish minimise glare - which can affect vision.
- Provide people with task lighting so where they might be required to read some information, for example in the consulting room.

Audio enable lifts to make certain that I can access them independently

- Make sure lifts are audio enabled so that people can navigate to the correct floor.
- Make sure the lifts have large, clear buttons with braille lettering with the call button high-lighted, perhaps simply be by painting a line around it.

Assist me to use visual display systems

- People are often required to use interactive displays to sign in for appointments, take a turn when waiting for tests, or when being called in for appointments. Visual displays and touch screen monitors are not accessible to many people with sight loss so make sure tactile and or audio enabled screens and announcements accompany the displays, or that someone is always available to offer assistance.

Clear obstacles to help to make the environment safer for me

- Ensure the corridors are free of any obstacles which could obstruct walkways and cause people to trip. Place objects in out of the way areas and make sure they contrast with the walls and flooring.
- Colour contrast the furniture with the décor – usually you can swap furniture from different clinics

Further Information

For further information please contact:

RNIB helpline: 0303 123 9999

Campaigns hotline: 020 7391 2123

RNIB and its supporters have also produced information on working with people with sight loss in the NHS, available at www.rnib.org.uk

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