

Covid-19: Supporting your blind and partially sighted customers

Retail Best Practice guidance



Introduction

As the lockdown risk is managed, we want to support your staff in helping customers 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 stores 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 the store environment, as well as policy changes. This could include floor indicators, payment zone protective screens, temporary signage, priority opening times and changes to store layouts/one-way systems. Not everyone will be able to see these, so try to include this information across your channels to help prepare your customers.

If there is temporary signage displayed in store to advise on store layout, policy changes or opening times, 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 customers.

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 go a long way.

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

Staff: Introduce yourself as customers may not see your uniform/name tag – "Hi I'm Steve, your customer support rep, 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 our "Helping you to help your customers" resource.

Hi I'm Steve,
how can
I help?



In-store & 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/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

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 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 customers with information in non-visual forms. For example, using tactile floor markers when queuing to enter a store or paying for goods.

Flexibility for guides

Many stores are still requesting that people shop by themselves, rather than with others in their household. As these policies have been relaxed for parents with children, we hope that you'll consider extending the same provision for people who are blind or partially sighted and require guiding or assistance.

Hygiene

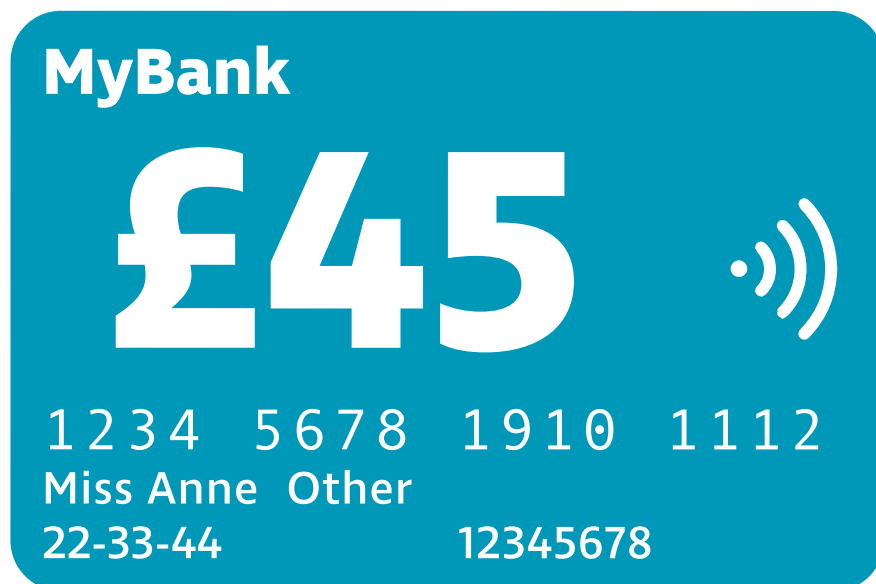
For many blind and partially sighted people, identifying products in-store can be a difficult and an extremely tactile process. To maintain the required level of hygiene, please highlight to your blind and partially sighted customer where they can sterilise their hands, baskets or trolleys.

Protective screens

With the installation of protective screens in-store, 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 in some stores. However, for those that need to use cash, be aware that suggesting that this can only be done via a self-service checkout could prove difficult for some customers living with sight loss.



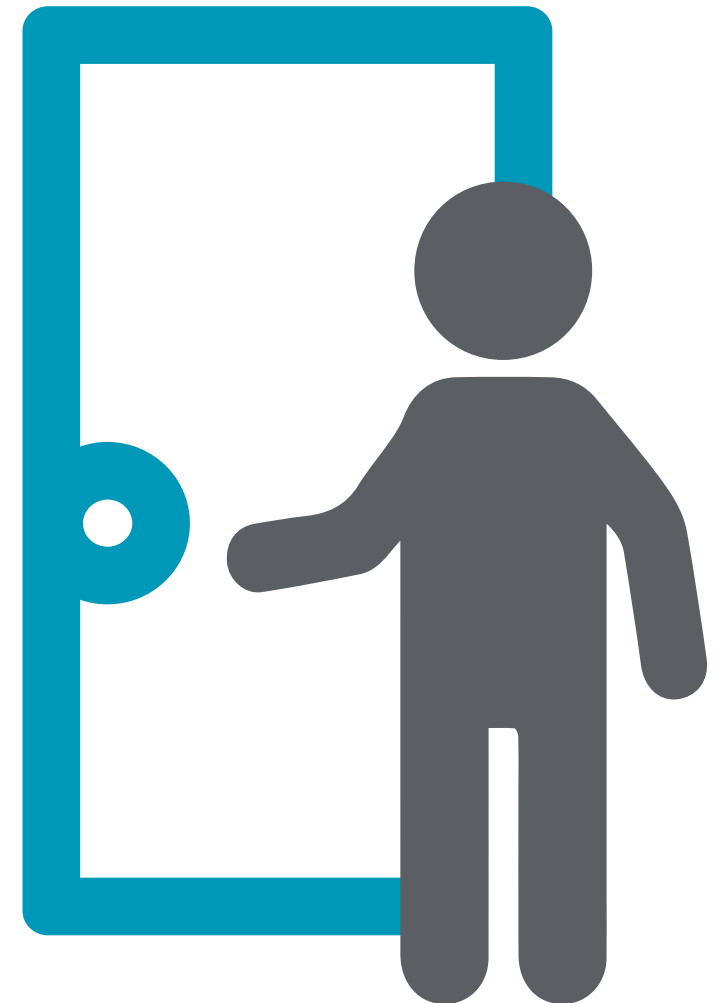
Innovative accessible solutions

We know that many retailers are exploring how to better support their customers with innovative ways of delivering information; such as the ability to scan and pay for goods. 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.

If you would like to get in touch with us, email our team at BusinessLink@rnib.org.uk

Home delivery and Click & Collect

If you are dropping a delivery at the door of a blind or partially sighted customer, or providing a 'Click & Collect' service, step back, introduce yourself and let the customer know where you have placed the package or delivery. Using specific language, such as: "Your shopping is in several bags to your left in the porch" will be far easier for someone to track than "It's there" and pointing.



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 purchasing your goods or not.**

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

Find advice on accessible information on our website:
<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 provided to our clients are delivered on a for-profit basis and these profits are then used to help fund our charitable activities.

RNIB supports industry sectors with consultancy and business as usual services; such as fulfilment of alternative format transcription. This engagement ranges from financial services, travel and transport, retail, leisure and health sectors. We can assist with evaluations on the accessibility of designs, 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

For more information, please visit:
rnib.org.uk

Standing with you
through every
challenge

