



Making your workplace accessible for blind and partially sighted people

Every six minutes, someone is told they're going blind. In London, 200,000 people are living with sight loss, and this is set to increase. Yet many workplaces aren't set up to support them.



Vision Foundation
London's sight loss charity

Why accessibility matters

People who are blind or partially sighted have skills to offer just like everyone else. Organisations benefit from their talents and expertise in almost every area of employment. But to succeed, they need a safe, supportive workplace they can navigate easily, and the right tools to do the job.

Making your workplace accessible for blind and partially sighted people will help you attract and retain valuable staff members, and empower more people living with sight loss to succeed at work.

This factsheet outlines the law on accessibility and some simple adjustments you can make.

Accessibility and the law

The Equality Act 2010¹ says employers must make reasonable adjustments to make sure people with disabilities aren't at a substantial disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled.

One of the things you need to consider is how accessible your workplace is. This means thinking about the layout, physical features and routes in and out.

How to make your workplace accessible

Making your workplace accessible for people with sight loss doesn't have to be difficult, or expensive. Often, applying common sense and simple health and safety rules is all that's needed.

Small changes can make a big difference. Here are some simple adjustments that can help make offices, workspaces and their surroundings more accessible for people living with sight loss.

(Please see our factsheet "What employers need to know about Access to Work" to find out how the government can help with costs of certain adjustments.)



**The truth is,
if you're not
recruiting disabled
people, your
competitors
probably are.**



Paul Polman
Former CEO,
Unilever

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Entrances and reception areas

By considering a few key things, you can help make blind and partially sighted people feel welcome from the moment they arrive at your workplace.

- Add a doorbell where it will be easy to find. This is particularly important if your building has turnstiles, a large glass front or a doorway that isn't obvious, as it will mean blind and partially sighted people can ring for help.
- Position the reception desk in an obvious place.
- Arrange for reception staff to have Visual Awareness Training.

Stairs, steps and lifts

Simple adjustments, such as installing handrails and using contrasting colours, will help blind and partially sighted people move more safely between floors.

- Consider lining the lip of each step with brightly coloured paint or textured material.
- Place handrails on both sides of all stairways, from top to bottom.
- Install audio alerts in lifts and on escalators.

Corridors and communal areas

Blind and partially sighted people can find their way around a workplace, but there are things you can do to make it easier and avoid dangerous hazards.

- Clear all corridors of clutter and unnecessary obstacles.
- Arrange seating areas in a logical way that allows easy access.
- Tidy workplace clutter such as open drawers, bins, boxes and recycling sacks that might present a trip hazard.
- Mark the ground with textured or painted strips to help with navigation.
- Make door handles, frames, doors and walls clearly visible using contrasting colours.

Signage

When designing and installing signage, there are some important things you can do to help people with sight loss find their way around.

- Use large print, tactile surfaces and raised lettering and/or braille.
 - Make signs as bright and visual as possible, using contrasting colours between the text and the background.
 - Position signs at eye level whenever you can.
 - Place signs identifying rooms or spaces on doors for clarity.
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Lighting

Lighting can be especially important for blind and partially sighted people. Each person's needs will be different, so ask directly what will be most helpful for them.

- Remember that both the amount of light and where it's coming from can make a difference.
- In general, it's best to avoid direct glare from windows, lamps and overhead strip lighting.

Noticeboards

When sharing news and information on walls or noticeboards, make sure you also tell blind and partially sighted colleagues via intranet or email.

Kitchens

Keeping kitchens tidy, with everything in the same place, makes them much easier to navigate for blind and partially sighted people.

- Use tactile stickers to mark key items such as microwaves and sugar, tea and coffee caddies.

Ask people living with sight loss

These suggestions are designed to support people with sight loss at work. But it's important to remember that not everyone's needs will be the same.

When considering adjustments, speak to any blind or partially sighted people on your team to find out what they think will help them.

For new employees, arrange a tour of the workplace. Allow time to talk about their needs and any extra adjustments that may be required.

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“I struggled each morning to navigate the open plan office to reach my desk until a simple carpet runner was laid from the main door to my desk. Life became so much easier after that!”

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About the Vision Foundation

The Vision Foundation transforms the lives of people facing or living with sight loss by funding projects that inform, empower and include.

Being blind or partially sighted shouldn't mean you're left out, isolated or held back. But too many people are. That's why we amplify the voices of blind and partially sighted people and inspire others to advocate and take action.

Our mission is to make London a shining example of a sight loss aware city.

Four ways you can make a difference...

Donate

Fundraise for us, make a donation or leave us a gift in your will to fund our life-changing work.

Shop

Visit your local Vision Foundation shop to donate and buy pre-loved clothes, books and toys.

Share

Do you have experience of living with sight loss? Share your story with us and together we'll change hearts, minds and lives.

Join

Become part of our expanding team of passionate volunteers and employees, working each day to make a difference.

Connect with us:

Call us: **020 7620 2066**

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Website: **www.visionfoundation.org.uk**

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