

## Tips for train operators to support blind or partially sighted people during COVID-19

*This guide has been written by blind and partially sighted people working with Sight Loss Councils.*

- 1. Be aware:** Not all blind and partially sighted people “look blind” (wear dark glasses, use a cane or a guide dog), so be mindful that it may not always be obvious. They may however be wearing a Sunflower badge or a lanyard so they can be easily recognised as someone requiring assistance. Passengers with a visual impairment will require more verbal information than others, so please be clear and accurate when communicating.
- 2. Introduce yourself:** If you think that someone needs help, introduce yourself as these passengers may not see your uniform - a simple: “Hi I’m Steve, I work for the railway, is there anything I can do to help today?” can go a long way.
- 3. Social distancing:** Many blind and partially sighted passengers will find it difficult to maintain social distancing. So, keep this in mind when you’re on duty. There may be a small number of instances where it is not possible, for the entire duration of the assistance, to comply with the current 2m distancing rule. However, it should be possible to keep this to a minimum and in most cases, just a few seconds. For example, consider guiding the passenger to a waiting area / seating on the platform if the train is not ready and then guiding the passenger onto the train.
- 4. Guiding:** If someone usually requires ‘traditional’ guiding in public areas and there is no safe alternative, they will need to be guided. Single use face masks and hand sanitisers should be used where possible. If the passenger is being accompanied, ask if the person with them is their usual means of support and advise them of hygiene procedures. You can find more information on guiding on the RNIB website:  
[www.rnib.org.uk/advice/guiding-blind-or-partially-sighted-person](http://www.rnib.org.uk/advice/guiding-blind-or-partially-sighted-person)

Just like anyone else, blind and partially sighted people will have personal preferences in how they receive support. Probably the most important tip is to always ask the person to tell you how they would like to be helped. It should be possible to assist someone safely but still enable them to retain their dignity.

5. **Hygiene:** To keep everyone safe, please highlight to your blind and partially sighted customers where they can sterilise or wash their hands - don't assume everyone knows where it is.
  
6. **Changes to the environment:** Make sure your blind and partially sighted passengers are aware of changes within the station environments, such as floor indicators, and temporary barriers to control passenger flows.