# Sighted guiding (Scotland)

9 August 2021

## Introduction

The principles below are intended for all blind and partially sighted individuals who require sighted guiding assistance, and have been developed in partnership by RNIB, Guide Dogs and Thomas Pocklington Trust. They are based on guidance in force in Scotland on 9 August 2021 but people should stay up to date with “[Coronavirus restrictions: what you can and cannot do](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/)” and more detailed [current government COVID-19 advice](https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/) as guidance is subject to change. This is particularly important as new variants of the virus arise, and affected locations may be subject to additional guidance, such as the maintenance of 2m social distancing, and not travelling outside the affected area.

In the case of any ambiguity, government-issued guidance should always take precedence. **You should continue to follow all government coronavirus guidance, even if you’ve been vaccinated against COVID-19.**

The Ready Scotland "[Get help - additional support for you and someone you know](https://ready.scot/coronavirus/get-help)" webpage provides advice for people who require support to get out and about. From 9 August, most restrictions have been lifted, and individuals will be expected to use their own judgement to protect themselves and those around them.

Sighted guiding provides support for someone whose sight is not sufficient to safely negotiate an unfamiliar environment, from another person. Ordinarily it involves the person being guided keeping light contact with a guider’s elbow, standing alongside and slightly behind to the left or right, depending on personal preference. While moving, the guider will also talk to the person being guided to provide additional information about any immediate hazards.

Staff or volunteers providing sighted guiding support should first follow their organisation’s policies and guidance in doing so.

In addition, the Scottish Government released "[Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for those providing guide support](https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20200711110224/http%3A/www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-those-providing-guide-support/)" as a helpful resource.

## 1. Protecting different groups of people

This advice is aimed at all blind and partially sighted people, and sighted guiders who are fit and well, confident about guiding practice, and following [Coronavirus restrictions: what you can and cannot do](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/) and, if appropriate, their own organisation’s guidance.

Extremely clinically vulnerable blind and partially sighted people, who were previously shielding, should continue to be cautious, even if they have been fully vaccinated, and follow "[Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for people at high risk](https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-highest-risk/)".

## 2. Who should help you

You can receive support from anyone. However, you can reduce the risk to yourself and those around you by being guided by someone in your household, or a Personal Assistant (if you have one), friend or carer to keep the number of people involved as low as possible.

## 3. What everyone should take account of to minimise the risks while guiding

With the rise of new variants, even fully vaccinated people can still spread the coronavirus. Everyone involved should continue to follow "[What we need to do to keep safe](https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/)" guidance by:

* [get the vaccine](https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine) when you are offered it
* wear a face covering, clean hands and surfaces regularly
* avoid crowded places and stay 1m away from other people
* meet outside if you can, and open windows when indoors
* [if you have symptoms get a test](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-get-a-test-if-you-have-symptoms) and stay at home
* take [regular tests if you don't have symptoms](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-get-a-test-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms) to reduce the risk of spreading the virus
* use the [Protect Scotland](https://protect.scot/) and [Check-in Scotland](https://www.mygov.scot/help-qr-check-in) apps

In addition:

* keeping good hand hygiene and washing them more frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds, or using hand sanitizer, particularly whenever you enter or leave a building, touch a surface, and before and after putting a face covering on or off, or touching your face;
* avoiding touching the face unnecessarily, particularly eyes, nose and mouth;
* catching coughs and sneezes in the crook of the elbow of your free arm, or a disposable tissue, and then immediately disposing of it in a waste (not recycling) bin and washing or sanitising hands;

## 4. What people providing guiding support to customers can do

Staff or volunteers involved should follow their own organisation’s policies and guidance, which should include the mitigation advice set out above.

In addition, people needing sighted guiding support should:

* where possible, book support in advance;
* set out what support you need;
* be prepared to give your name and contact details, if required; and
* if contacted by Protect Scotland, follow their advice.

The organisation providing the support should:

* be following guidance for [guidance on individual occupational risk assessment](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-risk-assessment-for-the-workplace/) and [general guidance for safer workplaces](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/) to minimise risks for staff and customers;
* have provided any necessary training and equipment to their staff;
* provide [evidence of your vaccination status](https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine/after-your-vaccine/get-a-record-of-your-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-status) if they have been advised to do so;
* on the day, check the person being supported hasn’t got COVID-19 symptoms and hasn’t been advised to stay at home or quarantine themselves, before providing support; and
* maintain records of the people who have been supported by each member of staff for 21 days and be prepared to provide this information to Protect Scotland, if needed.

## 5. Optional: wearables

If you feel more comfortable continuing to socially distance, you could use a [“Please give me space” badge](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/please-give-me-space-social-distancing-cards-or-badges).

If you want to indicate discretely that you have a hidden disability and may need additional support, you could consider using a [Sunflower lanyard](https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/).

## 5. No guiding is possible while self-isolating or quarantining

If either the person being guided or guider returns a positive Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test, is advised to self-isolate after coming into contact with someone who has tested positive, or develops COVID-19 symptoms, then "[Guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-infection)" must be followed.

If they are able to, all parties should follow "[Coronavirus (COVID-19): getting tested in Scotland"](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested/). No guiding will be possible while self-isolating or quarantining.

## 6. Additional resources

You should keep up to date with advice from [RNIB’s Coronavirus updates](https://www.rnib.org.uk/coronavirus-updates), and the [Sight Advice FAQs](https://www.sightadvicefaq.org.uk/) website. Both provide information for blind and partially sighted people on how to adjust to living with the impact of coronavirus restrictions.

The [Guide Dogs coronavirus section](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/covid19) has information for blind and partially sighted people, and for those who support them, and has tips for getting out and about.

## Contact

For further information please contact

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### Telephone RNIB’s Helpline: 0303 123 9999