

Hints and tips for health settings to help support blind or partially sighted people during the COVID-19 crisis.

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 that they can be easily recognised as someone requiring assistance. People with sight loss will require more verbal information than others so please be clear and accurate when communicating.
2. **Guiding:** If someone usually requires ‘traditional’ guiding in public areas and there is no safe alternative, they will need to be guided. Therefore, single use face masks and hand sanitizers should be made available. If the patient is not being accompanied, advise them of hygiene procedures. You can find more information on guiding on the RNIB website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/advice/guiding-blind-or-partially-sighted-person>

3. **Social distancing:** Many patients living with sight loss will find it difficult to maintain social distancing owing to them being unable to understand what 2M equates to. So, keep this in mind when you're on duty.

4. **Introduce yourself:** If you think that someone needs help, introduce yourself as patients may not see your uniform - a simple: "Hi I'm Steve, I work at the hospital, is there anything I can do to help today?" can go a long way.

5. **Hygiene:** To keep everyone safe, please highlight to your blind and partially sighted patients where they can sterilise their hands, don't assume everyone knows where it is. Instructions such as "behind you are the sanitisers" or "It's over there," may sound obvious not to say but, often it happens.

6. **Changes to the environment:** Since the outbreak of COVID-19 many patients with sight loss may feel anxious visiting hospital. You can help reassure them by making sure they are aware of changes within the hospital-environments such as: floor indicators, screens and temporary barriers. Ensure any temporary signage is at least size 48-point font – hand-written notes are difficult for everyone to read so where you can, verbalise these changes to the patient.

How do Volunteer Responders help?

Volunteer Responders support vulnerable individuals through one of the following four roles: →

- NHS Volunteer Responders are an **additional emergency resource** to complement local provision in this time of crisis
- Referrals for support can be from any health professional, local authority, charity or social care provider through www.goodsamapp.org/NHSreferral; self-referrals can also now be made
- A Call Centre supports enquiries from referrers and volunteers



Community Response volunteer: This role involves collecting shopping, medication or other essential supplies for someone who is self-isolating, and delivering these supplies to their home.



Patient Transport volunteer: This role supports the NHS by providing transport to patients who are medically fit for discharge, and ensuring that they are settled safely back in to their home.



NHS Transport volunteer: This role involves transporting equipment, supplies and/or medication between NHS services and sites, it may also involve assisting pharmacies with medication delivery.



Check-in and Chat volunteer: This role provides short-term telephone support to individuals who are at risk of loneliness as a consequence of self-isolation.



Community Response Volunteer Plus for patients with cognitive impairments and or significant vulnerabilities who are shielding

Check in and Chat Plus – coming soon!