

Guiding



For those living with a visual impairment, navigating unfamiliar places can provide more of a challenge.

While most people with a visual impairment can and do independently travel, some may want or require extra support, particularly when navigating unfamiliar places.

This leaflet gives advice on approaching and guiding blind or partially sighted people.

Offering help

When approaching a person who may need guiding assistance:

- Please introduce yourself and ask if they require any support.
- If the person agrees that they do, then offer your arm, allowing them to grip just above the elbow and keep this arm at your side. Some people may prefer to put their hand on your shoulder.
- Try to walk at the pace of the person you are guiding, neither too fast or too slow, so those being guided can detect body movements to indicate a turn or a step.



Steps and stairs

When approaching a stair or step, tell the person to 'step up' or 'step down'. When reaching flat level, take a step forwards and wait for the person you're guiding to complete the step. Please advise if there is a handrail and check if the person would like to use their foot to feel where steps begin and end.



Guiding in cars

The best way to help a visually impaired person into a car is by placing one of their hands on the door and one on the edge of the roof so that they can guide themselves in safely.

Always let the person get seated at their own pace.

Parting company

When the journey is over, make sure you tell the blind or partially sighted person:

- where they are
- the direction in which they are facing
- where they should go next
- that you are leaving

General points

- Take extra care when guiding through crowds or traffic, using crossings, wherever possible.
- Be aware of potential hazards such as parked cars, kerbs, overhanging bushes, or rubbish bins, giving the person you are guiding, plenty of warning.
- Don't assume a blind or partially sighted person requires help. Always ask before you act.
- If there are aids to mobility, such as guide rails, while travelling around, let the person you are guiding know.
- Never distract a working guide dog by stroking, feeding or calling it. If you see a guide dog user at a crossing holding the dog's lead rather than the harness, offer to help in the usual way.