

Interchange - making them work for blind and partially sighted people

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Supporting people
with sight loss

The basics

- There are over 2 million people living with sight loss in the UK
- Nearly 400,000 are registered as blind or partially sighted
- Many don't register - vast majority are over 50
- Only 3% of blind people have no light perception

How we navigate

- Just as eye conditions and their effects are diverse the strategies used to cope with them are also many.
- There are 3 types of white cane all used differently
- How someone uses a guide dog to navigate is very different to how they use a white cane
- Many use no obvious mobility aid at all

Guide Dogs

- Guide dog myths: They can read signs, they recognise changing lights at crossings - nope
- Dogs are trained to find a safe route using the "building shore line"
- Dogs are trained to recognise curbs as a place to stop

Using a cane

- Generally a person will use the building shore line to their side as an indicator for orientation
- Although some people will use the curb
- The cane is either tapped or swept in front of the person as they walk

Universal factors

- Blind and partially sighted people are often initially taught routes when they lose their sight but when those routes change there is no further training
- Wide open spaces are difficult to navigate through even with a guide dog
- Tactile paving, curbs, pedestrian crossings are relied on by visually impaired people.

Going out can become an assault course

- 90% of blind and partially sighted people have collided with something when walking in their local neighbourhood in the last 3 months
- 1/3 of those who had a collision were injured
- 59% with permanent street furniture
- 55% with temporary obstructions
- 49% with A-boards

Transport developments

- Only 60 of the 500 plus respondents reported recent changes to transport hubs and interchanges in their area.
- 34% said the changes made it a little harder to get around whilst 24% said that it was now a lot harder. 20% said as a result they use the area less often whilst 17% said they avoided the area.
- When all new developments were considered, not just transport the figures were similar with 33% saying it was a little harder and 19% saying it was a lot harder to get around with 25% using the area less often and 13% avoiding it.

Kings Cross St Pancras

- We took a group of visually impaired people and station developers out around Kings Cross St Pancras
- Some signage was very large and clear, some signage not as good
- Lighting uneven, some areas very gloomy others very light
- Walls and pillars in unusual places

Kings Cross St Pancras

- Parts of the station are very open with no obvious routes to follow
- Other areas are more constrained forcing people into corridors and causing bottlenecks
- TfL turn up and go assistance a big help but not when St Pancras staff refuse to guide people on to LU property.



Shinagawa station

Tokyo

- Has 335,000 boarding passengers daily
- National rail including Shinkansen, as well as local railway and metro services
- Clear signage
- Yellow tactile strip
- Cultural differences - everyone very orderly

RNIB Maps For All

- Tactile maps which can be produced in hardwearing plastic for stations and travel centres
- Tactile maps which can be printed out for individuals to take away with them.
- East Coast train stations now all have these maps as do various places around the country
- First vehicle map designed for Brighton and Hove's new buses

Where to find out more

- RNIB website www.rnib.org.uk/onmystreet
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