

HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH SIGHT LOSS

A practical guide to improving existing homes



 Thomas Pocklington Trust
Housing and support for
people with sight loss

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**Housing Learning and
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people with sight loss

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The content and style of this publication has been informed by people with sight loss and by housing and support staff working in: Coventry City Council, the Extra Care Charitable Trust, Hammersmith and Fulham housing and support services, Thomas Pocklington Trust, Westside Shepherds Bush Support Services and The Wilberforce Trust.

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About Thomas Pocklington Trust

Thomas Pocklington Trust is a leading provider of housing, care and support services for people with sight loss in the UK. Each year we also fund a programme of social and public health research and development projects.

Pocklington's operations offer a range of sheltered and supported housing, residential care, respite care, day services, resource centres and volunteer-based community support services.

We strive to improve continuously the quality standards in our operational centres to meet the changing needs and expectations of our current and future service users. We are proud to be an Investor in People and a Positive about Disability organisation.

Our research and development programme aims to identify practical ways to improve the lives of people with sight loss by improving social inclusion, independence and quality of life, and improving and developing service outcomes as well as focusing on public health issues.

Good Practice Guides

The Pocklington Good Practice Guide series offers advice and insight based on research projects funded by Pocklington. The guides strike a balance between giving the reader information about the background and research, and presenting findings and giving advice. They are not prescriptive, but by drawing together experiences of what works, they aim to provide support to professionals working with people with sight loss.

In this publication, the terms 'visually impaired people', 'blind and partially sighted people' and 'people with sight loss' all refer to people who are blind or who have partial sight.

The photographs in this publication are not intended to show 'best practice' but to demonstrate the housing situations in which people with sight loss may live and where improvements may be made.


Scope and purpose


This Good Practice Guide is a tool to improve the homes of people with sight loss. It aims to support planned maintenance, replacements and refurbishment of the homes of people with sight loss and one-off adaptations in response to individual needs. It will be useful to people supporting others to live independently in their own homes and in particular to housing and support staff, occupational therapists and rehabilitation workers.

The publication draws on:

- the Pocklington Design Guide - *Housing for People with Sight Loss*
- audits of housing schemes against the Design Guide
- the views of people who have sight loss
- the views of managers and support staff working in general and specialist housing.

This publication does not repeat the detailed content of the Design Guide.

 This icon indicates where further information and detailed specifications can be found in the Design Guide.

 This icon indicates where further information can be found in the Useful resources section of this publication.

How common is sight loss?

About two million people in the UK have sight loss that affects their everyday life. Around one in eight people aged over 75, and one in three people aged over 90, have serious sight loss. Less serious sight loss can have a significant effect on daily living. Most people begin to lose their sight in later life because of normal ageing of the eye or the onset of age-related eye conditions, and the incidence of sight loss increases steeply with age. This means that most of the thirteen million people in the UK aged over 60 will have some degree of sight loss and that as numbers of older people in the population increase, so will the number of people with sight loss.

The nature and degree of a person's sight loss is related to their eye condition. While there is not a single solution or response to sight loss, general approaches have been shown to be useful.

Because sight loss is common it is essential that design, management and maintenance of people's homes should address sight loss and take action to make the most of sight. Good practice for sight loss will make homes safer, more secure and easier to live in and will support independence. Applying the advice in this publication will help the majority of people, whether or not they have sight loss, and will also help people with other sensory loss.



Foreword

Good design doesn't need to target a niche market. A well designed product should suit a wide variety of audiences, even if some of its features have developed from specific requirements.

At Dyson, when we develop a new product cleaner we design for humans. The new DC26 vacuum cleaner is our smallest yet most powerful machine. Much of the specification was determined specifically for Japan. But fundamentally it is for everyone, with special attention paid to a few specific needs.

And I believe that this is what Thomas Pocklington Trust does so well – challenging designers, architects and technical experts to bear in mind specific requirements to arrive at simple solutions which are good for everybody. But this guide goes beyond that – providing those well thought-out solutions to anyone who wants to make a difference to the lives of people with sight loss. In most cases, it's not something new or different – but something simple and considered.

I hope this publication will be widely used.



James Dyson, Engineer

Housing for People with Sight Loss: A Thomas Pocklington Trust Design Guide is a unique resource for architects and housing designers. This companion publication focuses on existing housing and the ways in which routine maintenance, refurbishment and renewals can improve housing for people with sight loss.

This publication shows what can be done to make any and every home safer, easier to live in and more pleasant for people with sight loss. I hope this publication will become an indispensable tool for housing managers, support and maintenance staff.



Mike Brace OBE, Chief Executive, VISION2020UK

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Improving homes: six key points

Improving homes so that they are better suited to people with sight loss should be part of routine maintenance and an ongoing process. Improvements do not have to involve re-building or major refurbishment. There is no need for a lot of money to be spent or for expenditure to be made all at the same time. Small changes, using everyday non-specialist equipment and resources, as part of routine maintenance and upgrading, can benefit everyone.

1. Involve people

People usually know what they would like to be improved in their home. They may not know how to achieve it or about changes that could make a big difference to their lives. People appreciate information, advice and discussion of alterations that may help them enjoy their home more and make the most of their sight.

2. Improve lighting

People with sight loss benefit from good general lighting and specific task lighting. Lights should be:

- Provided that can be dimmed so that light levels may be adjusted.
- Shaded to avoid glare.
- Switched and controlled separately.
- Available for 'task lighting' wherever people need to focus on an activity.
- Available to illuminate dark areas, such as inside cupboards and wardrobes.

3. Use colour and contrast

Using colours that reflect light and using contrasting colours to differentiate an object from its surroundings helps people to make the most of their sight, find what they need and where they are going. Colour contrast is achieved better with contrasting shades of one colour than with different colours in the same shade. Using different colours that are equally dark will not be effective. Contrast can be achieved by using different colours in paint or furnishings and by adding contrast colour strips. Contrasting colours can be used:

- On the edges of doors, bins, appliances and stairs to show where these are and highlight potential hazards.
- For handles and knobs on doors and appliances, and on grab rails or equipment to make it easier to locate and use them.
- For doors, door frames and walls to show where they are and make wayfinding easier.
- On the front edge of stairs and steps, and between a step and adjacent walls, to reduce trip hazards.

4. Avoid clutter

Both Indoors and outdoors, plenty of space and logical layouts for routes, furniture and equipment make it easier to move around and find things. Indoors, accessible cupboard and storage space is essential. Outdoors, pathways should not be overhung by plants or trees or obstructed by garden or street furniture.

5. Avoid glare

Glare creates dazzle that may make it hard to see. Non-reflective materials, such as matt wall finish tiles and flooring, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, reduce glare. Lamp shades and vertical blinds prevent glare from lights and windows.

6. Accessible appliances

People with sight loss need equipment that is easy to locate and use. Controls should be clear and, where possible, tactile or audible. Suitable equipment, from cookers to kettles, can be easily found or adapted, including use of tactile stickers.





The Objective

To involve people in making decisions about their own homes and find ways in which people may become as fully involved as they wish.

Key points

- Generally, people want to be involved in decisions about their home. This may be in a variety of ways, and in different ways at different times of their lives.
- Involving people in decisions about maintenance and adaptations in their home can avoid costly mistakes.
- People's priorities for their home may differ from those of housing, support and care staff.
- Generally, people understand that different priorities and budget restrictions constrain choices and options, and that compromises may be needed.
- The most important way to involve people is to demonstrate that their views are taken seriously and to provide clear information on what can and cannot be done, why, and what will happen.

A person-centred approach

People with sight loss are like everyone else in caring about the look and feel of their home. Involving people in decisions about their home is part of a person-centred approach to housing, support and care. Individuals should always be involved in decisions about changes that affect

their own home. Everyone affected by shared or communal areas should be involved in decisions about any changes. Areas that can make the most of sight should be discussed, including:

- Lighting.
- Colour schemes and colour contrasts.
- Layout.
- Adaptations to appliances and fixtures.


A person-centred approach recognises that people may choose to be more or less involved in changes to their home. Everyone has different things going on in their lives and expressing views on maintenance or adaptations may never be a priority for some people, while others may regard it as more important at some points in their lives than at others. When people are offered genuine opportunities to be involved they will choose whether, when and how to do so.

Involving people is an ongoing process

Involving people in decisions about their home is not a one-off or occasional event. It is more important at particular times (such as when refurbishments or routine maintenance are planned) or about specific issues (such as design of shared areas). Regular and structured ways of seeking people's views, such as a maintenance committee or a residents' association, are useful but are seldom the only way to find out people's views about their homes or discuss possible changes.

Communication

Good communication is at the heart of successfully involving people. People want to know they can express their preferences and that these are taken into consideration. They want information on what can and cannot be done, why and what will happen. Because communication is about relationships with people there can be no hard and fast rules but there are two main areas for action.

Information needs to be provided in the format that each individual prefers. This may be: large print, electronic files, audio, DAISY or Braille.  These formats can be provided at low cost.

Support for people to consider, and make their views known about, changes to their home is part of the work of housing, care and support staff. Staff need to be confident in supporting people to make their views known and to understand changes that may improve homes.

Staff working in shared housing should be aware of forthcoming consultations and of ongoing opportunities to change homes through maintenance or refurbishment programmes. They can then play a key role in supporting people to think about their home and make their views known, or agree to pass on the views of people who don't want to use other channels.

Meetings

In shared housing schemes, regular residents' meetings and special consultation events have an important place in improving individual homes and shared spaces, but they may not appeal to all and not everyone will be able to attend. Some people may have communications difficulties that inhibit them at meetings, while some simply prefer one-to-one conversations.

Meetings work best when there is:

- Advance publicity.
- A venue and time of day that suits the majority of people you want to hear from.
- Information about what is going on, in formats that people can use and which is available before and at meetings.
- A clear agenda.
- Someone who chairs the meeting well and ensures that people who wish to contribute can join in easily.
- Practical arrangements, such as clear signs to meeting rooms, good lighting and layout in rooms that make it easier for people to see and hear what is happening and help with transport to attend.

Training issues

Housing, care and support staff need to understand the impact of sight loss and how homes can be improved for people with sight loss, the opportunities for change and improvement and how to support people to consider changes and make their views known.

Contractors working in people's homes and in shared areas need to understand the impact of sight loss and appreciate the importance of people's views, priorities and preferences about their homes.





The Objective

To provide clear, safe and uncluttered entrances and circulation routes with features that assist navigation, wayfinding and safe movement.

What good practice looks like

External entrances

- Adequate lighting, colour contrast and texture to help find and use keys and locks.
- Door numbers, bells, knockers and handles are matt and contrast with the door.
- Callers can be recognised - via clear glazing beside the door, a door viewer, audible caller recognition or door entry system.
- Doormats in mat wells so that the surface of the mat is level with the surrounding area.
- Letter boxes centred within the door with a 'letter cage' on the inside.

Corridors and halls

- A corridor and hall that is free of obstacles.
- If needed, handrails that are circular or have rounded edges and are smooth to touch, are fitted in continuous runs uninterrupted by wall fixings.
- Vertical blinds to prevent glare are fitted on windows, especially at the ends of corridors.
- Contrasting colours differentiate doors, or types of doors and, in a multi-storey building, differentiate floor levels.

Doors

- A consistent method of opening throughout the home.
- For large cupboards or rooms, doors are sliding, or open into the room/cupboard (not a corridor), or hinged to open flush against the wall, or self-closing.
- Doors are painted in a matt or satin finish without glazing. If there is glazing, toughened glass is used and a distinctive motif on the glass at eye level indicates its location.
- Door colours clearly contrast with the wall and the door frame.
- The leading edge of the door is in a colour that contrasts with the rest of the door.
- Door handles are easy to use and are in a colour that contrasts with the door, at a consistent height throughout the home, a lever type that curves inwards at the edge.



Stairs and steps

- There are no open stair risers.
- There are no reflective materials, polished or slippery surfaces.
- Stairs are enclosed on the underside.
- Steps are consistent in height, in depth and in width from the wall. 📖🔍
- The colour of the step contrasts with the adjacent walls.
- The colour of the leading edge of the stair contrasts with the colour of the step.
- A textured surface or coloured strip makes the centre of the step clear.
- In communal settings, tactile floor surfaces indicate the top and bottom of stairs and steps.
- Continuous circular or rounded handrails on either side of the stairs have adequate clearance from the wall, are well secured, are in a colour that contrasts with the wall.
- Windows at the top and bottom of stairs or steps are fitted with vertical blinds.

Light and lighting

- General lighting is of an adequate level. 📖🔍
- Consistent light levels are controlled by switches at the top and bottom of stairs and both ends of corridors.
- Lights are positioned and shaded to avoid glare.
- Walls and ceilings are painted in light, matt colours that maximise lighting levels.

- Cupboards have shaded lights inside. 📖🔍
- Light switches are matt and in a colour that contrasts with their background.
- Use of passing detectors to operate dimmable lighting is considered.
- There is additional lighting near entrances and telephone sockets.

Things you can do now

Routine maintenance can make big improvements through work that can be achieved quickly, at low cost and with little upheaval. For example:

- Paint doors to contrast with walls and door frames and colour their leading edge in another contrast using paint or coloured tape.
- Repaint gloss paint with a matt finish.
- Change door handles to lever type with an inward curve at the end and in a colour that contrasts with the door.
- Check lighting levels and fit new lights and replace bulbs.
- Fit tactile flooring at top and bottom of stairs and steps. 📖🔍
- Fit vertical blinds to windows.
- If needed, fit continuous circular or rounded handrails along corridors, in colours that contrast with the wall.
- Fit continuous circular or rounded handrails on stairs and steps, in colours that contrast with the walls.

- Fit a textured surface or coloured strip in the middle of stairs and steps.
- Colour (with paint or very strong tape) the leading edge of stairs in a colour that contrasts with the step.
- Fix a floor indicator at the top and bottom of stairs, and in shared accommodation outside lifts; this can be as simple as fixing the same number of drawing pins into the wall as the number of the floor.
- Fix letter cages on the backs of front doors.






The Objective

To make the most of people's sight and provide safe and uncluttered working areas.



What good practice looks like

Space


- The layout is logical, for example the sink and cooker are close together.
- There is room for people to move around and between different areas and there are no obstacles.
- In a communal laundry there is space for people to put down their laundry, wait and circulate. 

Cupboards and surfaces

- Contrasting colours differentiate equipment or appliances and cupboards from floors, surfaces and walls.
- Glossy, reflective finishes are minimal - on work surfaces, walls, floors, appliances and controls.
- Measures have been taken to minimise the risk of people walking into cupboard doors, for example:
 - open shelving
 - sliding cupboard doors
 - hinged doors open fully to 180°
 - automatic door closing
 - eye level cupboard doors open no wider than the surface below.
- Handles on cupboards and drawers are easy to see and grip.

- There is plenty of natural light.
- Vertical blinds on windows prevent glare.
- Lighting is at an appropriate level, is consistent in the area, shaded and individually switched. 
- There is additional 'task lighting' where it is most needed, such as at the sink, the cooker and above work areas. 



Controls, switches and equipment

- Wherever possible, should be at the front of all appliances.
- Clear and distinct controls and indicators that contrast with their background.
- Settings on controls are tactile and audible. 



Things you can do now

Before any changes are made it is important to know how people would like to use their kitchen, utility or laundry areas and what they most want improved. People who like to cook may want better cooker controls; others may want better lighting in cupboards. You do not have to wait for a new kitchen to be fitted to make improvements. Small improvements can have high impact, quickly, at low cost and with little upheaval.

- Change cupboard door and/or drawer handles to contrast with their background.
- Reduce the risk of bumping into cupboard doors: remove them to create open shelves or add a colour paint or tape strip to the leading edge.
- Install shaded lighting immediately above work areas.
- Improve general lighting levels and consistency.
- Find and fit appliances with matt rather than shiny finishes.
- Paint cupboard doors to contrast with floors and walls.
- Find out about kitchen appliances that are easy to use. 
- Label equipment to make it easier to use - 'bumpon' or tactile stickers and large print labels can make controls on appliances and equipment easier to use. 



The Objective

To ensure that space and layout allow the usual range of furniture, that clear and logical layouts allow safe and easy movement and access to windows, switches and controls; that features make the most of sight and lighting supports people's chosen activities.

What good practice looks like Furniture layout

- Most furniture is against the walls.
- Circulation routes in and around the room are free of obstacles.
- A desk or work station provides enough space for equipment such as computer and screen reader.

Light and lighting

- There is an even level of light throughout the room and no dark areas.
- Lighting is positioned to prevent shadows from objects or from people moving about the room.
- Vertical blinds, appropriate lampshades and shaded fittings reduce glare.
- Table and floor lamps are positioned to avoid trailing wires and reduce risk of trips or bumps.
- Lights are individually switched and can be dimmed.
- Task lighting is available wherever required, including where people eat, read, write or use a computer.

Sockets, controls and equipment

- All sockets and controls for heating, windows, lights and electrical equipment can be used without moving furniture.
- There are sufficient and suitably placed electrical sockets for all equipment to be used without trailing wires.
- There is a television aerial point next to an electrical socket that can support equipment and task lighting.
- There is a telephone point next to an electrical socket that can support a computer, internet connection, call system, telecare equipment and task lighting.


Guide dogs


- There is sufficient space for a guide dog's bed and equipment, but this need not necessarily be in the living room.

Things you can do now

The ways that people use their living and dining areas vary, from person to person and over time. Most people use these areas for paperwork, hobbies and leisure. These activities will require personalised lighting, furnishings, equipment and other facilities. Before considering any changes it is important to know how each person would like to use their living and dining areas and what they most want to improve. Finding out how people would like to use their room is especially important in deciding where more, or better, lighting may be installed.

A review of the layout, lighting and equipment in the living room can help people to adjust to changing needs and priorities. Many changes that make a big difference incur no or low costs. Changes that are easy, low cost and cause little upheaval include the following.

- Position furniture to make best use of light and space and to make easy routes in and through the area.
- Install vertical blinds.
- Keep windows clean and clear of obstructions.
- Change lampshades, light fittings and bulbs to make the best use of light.
- Reduce glare and provide appropriate light levels, for example increase shaded light by using high wattage low energy  bulbs in circular paper shades.
- Add task lights where light is most needed.
- Decorate rooms in light colours that contrast with furnishings and floors.
- Ensure that switches and electrical sockets are not obstructed by furniture or curtains.

People who have Guide Dogs can access advice about provision and space for a dog from Guide Dogs (previously known as Guide Dogs for the Blind Association). 



The Objective

To ensure that space and layout allow the usual range of furniture, and clear and logical layouts allow safe and easy movement and access to windows, switches and controls; that features make the most of sight, and lighting supports dressing and personal grooming.

What good practice looks like

Space

- Routes between bedroom(s) and bathroom(s) /WCs are as short as possible, easy to follow, uncluttered and with good lighting.
- There is space to move around on both sides of the bed.
- Good use of space maximises room for wardrobes and other storage units for clothes and other things, and facilities that enable people to dress and care for their personal appearance.
- There is easy access to windows, switches and controls.



Storage and wardrobes

- Good provision of storage reduces clutter
- Wardrobe and cupboard doors do not cause obstructions; built in wardrobes have sliding doors.
- Wardrobes and large cupboards have interior lights that are:
 - operated by an accessible switch that is unlikely to be switched on accidentally (such as by an item falling against it).
 - turned off automatically after a short period.

Light and lighting: day and night

- There is an even level of light throughout the room and no dark areas.
- Lighting is positioned to prevent shadows from objects or from people moving about the room.
- Vertical blinds, appropriate lampshades and shaded fittings reduce glare.
- Lights are individually switched and can be dimmed.
- Task lighting is available wherever it may be required, for instance over drawers, at dressing tables, beside beds and at desks.
- Table and floor lamps are positioned to avoid trailing wires and risks of trips or bumps.

Telephone and television

- There is a telephone point next to an electrical socket suitable for lighting and connection of call system/telecare equipment.
- There is a television aerial point next to an electrical socket suitable for computer equipment and lighting.

Things you can do now

The way people use their bedrooms varies from person to person and over time. Most people use bedrooms for dressing, personal grooming, storing clothes and personal effects; some use them for hobbies or paperwork and some use equipment there to support health or care. Ease of moving around the bedroom is especially important in the night and when going to bed or getting up. At other times, different uses of the room may be facilitated by changes to lighting or furnishings.

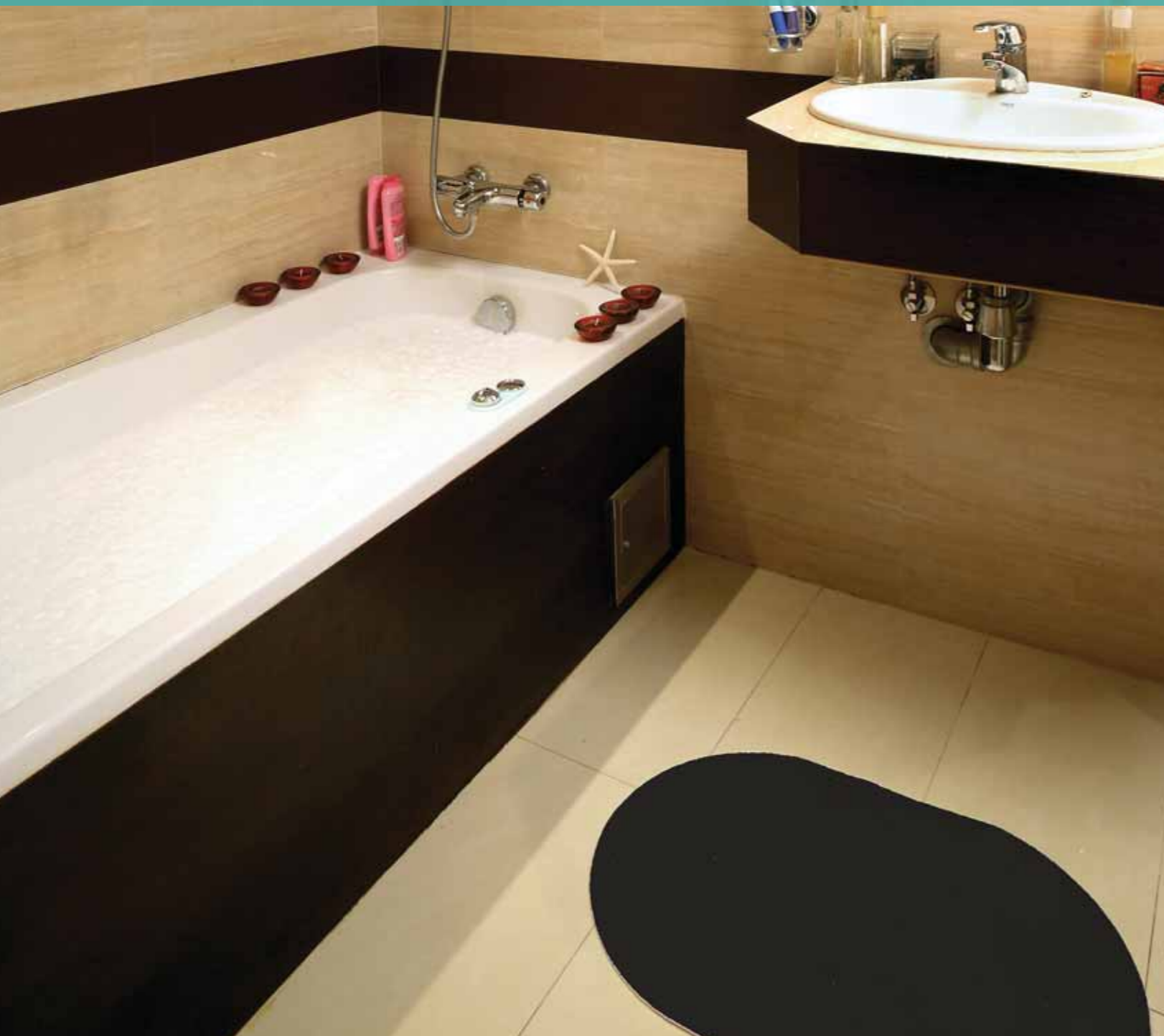
A review of the layout, lighting and furniture in the bedroom can help people consider and adjust to changing needs and priorities.

Changes that are easy, low cost and cause little upheaval include the following.

- Position furniture to make best use of light and space to make getting in and out of bed easy and provide clear routes in and through the room.
- Decorate rooms in light, matt colours that contrast with furnishings and floors.
- Install vertical blinds.

- Keep windows clean and clear of obstructions.
- Ensure lighting is sufficient.
- Change lampshades, light fittings and bulbs to make the best use of light, reduce glare and provide appropriate light levels. It is especially important to ensure that a bulb is shaded from view both from the bed and elsewhere in the room.
- Install lights inside wardrobes via fitted lights or plug in lights using electrical sockets that avoid trailing wires.
- Add task lights where light is most needed.
- Ensure that switches and electrical sockets are not obstructed by furniture or curtains.





The Objective

To enable independence and safety by providing easy access to, and within, the bathroom and/or WC and by making facilities as easy to use as possible.

What good practice looks like

Safety and access

- Routes between bedroom(s) and bathroom(s) /WCs are as short as possible, easy to follow, uncluttered and with good lighting.
- The bathroom has a logical layout and sufficient space to move around easily.
- Colour contrast shows the position of sanitary ware and equipment and the boundaries of the floor and walls.
- Non-slip floors are completely water-tight.
- Thermostatic controls prevent water scalding.
- Grab or handrails are in a colour contrasting with the wall and sanitary ware.
- Colour contrast is supported with contrast colour linen, soap and other bathroom items.
- Systems that keep soap and toiletries in the right place are used, including a shower caddy and soap-holder.

Light and glare

- There is an even level of light, including over shower and bath, and no dark areas.
- There is maximum natural light, but without glare.
- Lighting is positioned to prevent shadows, especially at washbasins and in showers/baths.

- Glare is prevented by use of
 - vertical blinds at windows
 - shaded light fittings
 - matt finishes wherever possible and in particular for tiling, floors, walls and ceilings.
- Lights are suitable for wet areas and are individually switched.
- Task lighting, including mirror lights, is available where necessary, e.g. above washbasins in shaving and make-up areas.

Showers

- The shower tray, or floor area is non-slip, recessed into the floor and without raised edges.
- The colour of the shower tray and, if required, a seat, contrasts with the walls and floors.
- Taps and controls contrast against their surroundings, are easy to grip and have clear lettering and/or tactile information to distinguish hot from cold.
- All supply pipe work is concealed.

WCs

- It is easy to reach the toilet.
- The toilet is easy to flush; a large easy grip/ spatula style handle or a large push button can be distinguished from the surrounding surface by colour and touch.
- WC seats and covers contrast with the toilet bowl, the cistern and the floor.

Baths and basins

- Colours contrast with surroundings.
- Bath panel colour contrasts with bath, floor and wall.

- The bath has hand grips and is slip-resistant.
- Taps are similar in style and position to kitchen taps, contrast against their surroundings and have clear lettering and/or tactile information to distinguish hot from cold.

Things you can do now

Even if it is not possible to refit a whole bathroom, small and low cost changes may make the bathroom safer and easier to use for everyone.

- Fit taps that are easy to use and are clearly marked for hot and cold.
- Keep windows clean and clear of obstructions.
- Fit vertical blinds on windows.
- Improve lighting by changing bulbs to respond to individual needs.
- Improve task lighting, especially above basins and showers.
- Fit a magnifying mirror.
- Fit a toilet seat in a colour that contrasts with the toilet.
- Repaint walls to provide colour contrast.
- Provide colour contrast with towels.
- Find out about bathroom equipment and accessories that are easy to use.



Some changes, such as grab rails, should be fitted as necessary to meet the needs of a particular individual. When making major changes or installing new bathrooms, attention to detail is important; curved rather than sharp corners on basins make sense for everyone.



The Objective

To minimise hazards and make outdoor areas as safe, accessible and easy to use as possible.

What good practice looks like Footpaths and pavements

- Footpaths and pavements are free of obstacles such as notices, bins or bin stores.
- Paths are wide enough for two people to walk together.
- Gates from a path, e.g. into a garden, open inwards.
- Paths contrast with adjacent surfaces.
- Path surfaces are smooth, even and slip-resistant.
- Slopes are avoided or kept to a minimum; if steep slopes or steps cannot be avoided an alternative route is provided.
- Tactile hazard pavings are used and conform to official guidance. 
- In housing schemes, apart from dropped kerbs, all kerbs to roads are of the same height and are marked with a clear line in a contrasting colour.
- In housing schemes, posts, columns, signs and bollards are placed so that they do not become hazards. 
- Bollards, if used, are not linked by chains or ropes.
- All gates, posts, signs and bins contrast with their background and carry a band at typical eye level in a contrasting colour.
- Trees and plants do not overhang paths.


Plants and gardens

- Planting helps people find their way and distinctive shapes, colours, smells and textures indicate different areas and routes.
- Low, rather than high level plants are used beside paths to enhance security and minimise obstacles.
- People can sit comfortably in garden areas, and can safely find their way around communal and private outdoor areas.

Parking



- Enough parking is available so that vehicles do not park in undesignated spaces and especially do not park with wheels on paths.
- Measures taken to prevent cars overhanging the footpath (such as signs or bollards) do not create a trip hazard.
- Homes without parking have a pick up/drop off point close to their main entrance.

Lighting and colour contrast

- After dusk a good, consistent, level of lighting is operated by sensors in all areas where people walk and in shared and communal areas. 
- Private patios and balconies are well lit and lighting does not create glare.
- Contrasting colours are used to distinguish the edges of footpaths, steps, doorways, gates and patios.

- Gates and doors to different properties vary in colour and form.
- Handles, knobs, names and numerals on gates and doors contrast with their background.

Dog runs

- Where homes share a communal outdoor space, an enclosed and gated dog run, with water and drains, is available for guide dogs to be taken for toileting. 
- A dog run in a private garden conforms to minimum size requirements defined by 'Guide Dogs' (formerly Guide Dogs for the Blind Association) and adheres to good practice defined by them. 




Things you can do now

People may feel outdoor areas cannot be changed, especially in communal settings, or that they are a lesser priority than indoors. Most people enjoy the chance to be outdoors but may be anxious about using areas that do not feel welcoming or safe.

Discussing what can be done may support people to make more use of outdoor areas.

Many people can benefit from small changes, made at low cost, that make life easier and safer. Routine maintenance is an important part of improving outdoor areas for people with sight loss and can include the following actions.

- Reduce trip hazards by pruning back plants and trees that overhang pavements and footpaths.
- Reduce clutter and keep routes through outdoor areas free of obstructions.
- Indicate different areas and routes to particular places with trees, shrubs and plants that are distinguished by smell, colour, shape or touch.
- Identify potential obstacles by creating colour contrasts with paint or tape on bins, gates and trip hazards.
- Replace cracked or paved paths with smooth surfaces and use tactile paving where appropriate to indicate hazards.
- Review outdoor lighting and where necessary install new lighting with PIR sensors.
- If dog runs are needed ask Guide Dogs for advice. 

Assist UK 

A UK-wide network of locally situated centres that offer information, advice and exhibitions of products and equipment to support independent living. Centres may provide opportunities to see and buy equipment.

Website: www.assist-uk.org

Email: generalinfo@assist-uk.org

Tel: 0870 770 2866

Braille translation services

Braille translation services can print/emboss labels, signs and other materials. Find these through RNIB (see below), local VI societies (see below) or 'google' for braille translation services.

DAISY (Digital Accessible Information Systems)

Software to create DAISY files is available from various suppliers. RNIB can provide information and advice.

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Email: digitalaccess@rnib.org.uk

Tel: 020 7388 1266

Guide Dogs (formerly Guide Dogs for the Blind Association)

Provide guide dogs and mobility services that increase the independence and dignity of blind and partially sighted people.

Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk

Email: guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk

Tel: 0118 983 5555

Local Authorities (LAs)

LAs with social services functions include vision rehabilitation staff who can provide advice on alterations to the housing of people with sight loss. They have special expertise in lighting, colour and contrast.

Contact your LA and ask for the sensory or visual impairment team.

Local VI Societies

A network of local societies or associations belong to the National Association of Local Societies for Visually Impaired People (NALSVI). Societies vary in the type and range of services they offer. Some support a Resource Centre where people can see and try aids and equipment appropriate to people with sight loss. Some stock and sell equipment from RNIB (see below).

Website: www.nalsvi.org

Tel: 01302 571888

RNIB

RNIB provides information about the prevalence, causes and impact of different eye conditions as well as national, regional and local services to support people with sight loss.

Through its national, regional and local services, local Resource Centres and online and 'phone shop, the RNIB offers a wide range of support to improve the lives of people with sight loss, including items of equipment for purchase.

Website: <http://onlineshop.rnib.org.uk>

Email: cservices@rnib.org.uk

Tel: 0845 702 3153 / 01733 37 53 50

The Telecare Services Association

A signpost to sources of advice and suppliers of telecare equipment that may enable people to live independently in their own home.

Website: www.telecare.org.uk

Thomas Pocklington Trust

Thomas Pocklington Trust is a specialist provider of housing for people with sight loss and commissions research, including research about housing for people with sight loss.

Thomas Pocklington Trust's Design Guide is the source of the guidance in this publication. It is published by IHS BRE Press, Ref: EP84, ISBN 978-1-84806-029-6, Paperback, £40. It is available from www.ihsbrepres.com or IHS BRE Press, Willoughby Road, Bracknell RG12 8FB. 

Pocklington's website contains research-based reports and good practice guides that address issues about housing for people with sight loss and offers information on lighting and design at home, including a forthcoming guide to improving lighting.

Website: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk

Email: research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Questions	Yes/no/partly	Urgent action required?
Is there adequate lighting at the entrances?		
Does door furniture contrast with the door?		
Is door furniture in a non-reflective finish?		
Are doormats level with the surrounding area?		
Is the letter box centred in the door?		
Is there a cage to catch letters on the inside of the door?		
Are there obstacles or hazards in the corridor/hallway?		
If needed, are there continuous, rounded handrails in a contrasting colour in corridors?		
Are handrails uninterrupted by wall support fixings?		
Are vertical blinds fitted on windows, especially at the ends of corridors and/or the top and bottom of stairs?		
Do doors have a contrast colour on their leading edge?		
Are doors painted in matt or satin finish?		

These checklists are tools to use when reviewing possible improvements to a home or room to improve the way in which the needs of people with sight loss are met.

The questions in the first column correspond to good practice outlined in this publication.

Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Are doors painted to contrast with the walls?		
Are lever-type handles used on the doors?		
Are stairs enclosed on the underside?		
Is the back of the step enclosed?		
Does the colour of the step edge differ from the step?		
Are there continuous, rounded handrails in a contrasting colour on stairs and steps?		
Does the colour of steps contrast with the adjacent walls?		
Are the walls around the stairs painted in a light matt finish?		
Are there tactile warnings at the top and bottom of stairs?		
Are the stairs free of reflective materials and polished or slippery surfaces?		
Is there good lighting on the stairs?		
Are there light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs?		



Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Does the kitchen area have a logical layout?		
Are there obstacles or hazards?		
Is there a colour contrast between the cupboards, walls, working surfaces and floor?		
Is there a colour contrast between handles and cupboards/drawers?		
Do cupboard doors cause a hazard when open?		
Is there enough light in the kitchen?		
Is there additional lighting where it is most needed (task lighting)?		
Are all lights individually switched?		
Are there vertical blinds?		
Have shiny/reflective surfaces been kept to a minimum?		
Do all appliances have clear controls and indicators?		
Do controls contrast with the appliance?		
Can control settings be understood by sound or touch?		



Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Is the centre of the room free of furniture?		
Are the areas free of obstacles or hazards?		
Is there enough light in the living and dining areas?		
Is there additional lighting where it is most needed (task lighting)?		
Are all lights individually switched?		
Can all electrical sockets be reached without moving furniture?		
Are there sufficient electrical sockets?		
Is the television aerial next to an electrical socket?		
Is the telephone point next to an electrical socket?		
Is there sufficient space for a bed for a guide dog?		
Is there sufficient lighting at desks and work stations?		
Are there sufficient electrical sockets adjacent to television, telephone, desk and work stations?		



Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Is the route between the bedroom and bathroom/WC clear and easy to follow?		
Is there sufficient bedroom furniture and storage units?		
Is there room to move around both sides of the bed?		
Are wardrobe and cupboard doors safe when open?		
Are lights individually switched?		
Is there sufficient lighting?		
Is the lighting shaded from below to avoid glare?		
Are there dimmer switches?		
Are there lights in the wardrobes and cupboards?		
Is there task lighting above drawers and at dressing tables?		
Are there sufficient electrical sockets to support use of aids or equipment needed?		



Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Is the route between the bedroom and bathroom/WC easy to follow?		
Is the area free of obstacles or hazards?		
Are the floors and walls in contrasting colours?		
Is there a colour contrast between equipment and surroundings?		
Are controls easy to use (tactile if appropriate)?		
Are taps easy to use and clear as to which is hot and cold?		
Is the toilet easy to flush?		
Are thermostatic controls fitted to avoid scalds?		
Is the floor non-slip?		
Is there enough light in the bathroom?		
Is there additional lighting where it is most needed (task lighting)?		



Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Are there vertical blinds?		
Have shiny/reflective surfaces been kept to a minimum?		
Are grab rails in place to meet the needs of the current user/s?		
Is the shower tray recessed?		
Does the bath have hand grips?		
Do the bath and shower have non-slip surfaces?		
Are there systems to keep soap and toiletries in the right place?		



26 Checklist: Outdoor Areas

Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Are paths free of obstacles?		
Are paths at least 1200 mm wide?		
Are paths flat or with a minimal slope (gradient less than 1:12)?		
Are the edges of paths marked with a contrast?		
Do plants help people locate areas and routes?		
Are there tactile pavements where appropriate?		
Are kerbs all the same height (except for dropped kerbs?)		
Do all kerbs have a colour contrast line?		
Is there sufficient parking in designated spaces?		
Is there a pick-up/drop-off point near to a main entrance?		
Is there an adequate level of lighting?		
Is the lighting set so that it does not inconvenience anyone?		
Are there Passive InfraRed (PIR) sensors?		
Is there an enclosed and gated dog run?		



Notes

Notes

Authors

This good practice guide was written by Nikki Joule and Ros Levenson.

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This publication may be reproduced or copied. Thomas Pocklington Trust welcomes feedback about the use of these materials for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

In this publication, the terms 'visually impaired people', 'blind and partially sighted people' and 'people with sight loss' all refer to people who are blind or who have partial sight.