

Thomas Pocklington Trust



Housing and support for  
people with sight loss



# Making an entrance:

Colour, contrast and design of entrances to  
homes of people with sight loss

September 2013



## Making an entrance: checklist

The research project on the design of home doorways and entrances of people with sight loss was carried out for Thomas Pocklington Trust by Kingston University London in 2012/13.

The aim of the study was to identify practical solutions to the most common problems encountered by visually impaired people when entering or leaving their homes.

The checklist has been prepared using views and experiences of visually impaired people, housing professionals, local authority officials, access consultants, architects and manufacturers. It pinpoints key areas which cause problems for visually impaired people when entering their homes and offers hints and tips on how to address these issues.



## My front door

*"It would be helpful to be able to identify my own front door from a distance"*

### Hints and tips:

- An exterior door painted a colour that contrasts strongly with the front of the building – either lighter or darker
- A personal door inside a communal main entrance painted a different colour to make it stand out
- An intercom or easy entry system that works remotely with a vibrating fob or mobile phone to alert a person to the nearness of their home
- Limit clutter and keep areas around doorways clear so trip hazards are removed



## Door handle

*"I can't see the door handle on my door"*

### Hints and tips:

- A door handle that is in a strong contrasting colour to the door
- A coloured, metal chrome, brass or steel door handle that contrasts with your current door colour; a dark door shows up the bright metal and a light door could have a contrasting coloured handle
- A door handle at your personal entrance that is highlighted by luminescent strips, directed lighting or is photo-luminescent





## Keyhole and lock

*“It’s difficult to locate the keyhole and lock on my door”*

### Hints and tips:

- A keyhole and lock in a strong contrasting colour or metal finish to the door; on a pale door a darker metal coated keyhole and lock is best
- A metal satin, chrome or brass lock that contrasts with the darker coloured door
- A keyhole or lock with an edge or lip that is easier to identify by touch
- Existing keyhole and lock highlighted with a hard tactile marking outline
- A security lock that accepts a key entry in any direction



## Walls

*“I have trouble seeing where my front door actually is”*

### Hints and tips:

- An exterior wall painted a lighter or darker colour than the door; a Light Reflectance Value (LRV) difference of at least 50 is useful for the door to be seen at a distance
- The wall painted a contrasting colour to the door frame and the door; this helps a person see where the door is, and the edge of the door frame when the door is open





## Lighting

*"I dislike bright glare and dark areas where the lights don't come on"*

### Hints and tips:

- Lighting which automatically illuminates the doorway or entrance when approached is helpful and an added security measure
- Lights that are set to come on automatically when light levels are low at different times of the day
- Lights over the door, external steps and on the pathway are important at night
- Automated sensor lights highlighting the doorstep when approached
- Better lighting on the door inside the exit



## Door number

*"I can't see my door number and a lot of homes look the same"*

### Hints and tips:

- A high contrast number and background large enough to see from a distance
- A house number plate contrasting with the background colour of the wall or door
- Chrome numbers on a dark door or black numbers on a white door
- A luminescent house number that is clearer to see at night



## Signage and landmarks

*"I need something to help me to identify my home and entrance when I am near"*

### Hints and tips:

- A contrasting landmark located near the front door or on a post at the entrance
- A sign for the property or house
- A black or white, highly visible plant tub that can be seen from a distance
- Existing metal or wooden post or gate at the entrance can be painted a contrasting strong colour from its background



## Steps

*"I can't see very easily where the steps start and end"*

### Hints and tips:

- Contrasting step nosing installed on the front edges of exterior or interior steps or stairs. Contrast should be 60 points of LRV difference
- Paint line on edge of step in a lighter or darker colour than the step, contrasting with the step itself
- Re-surface steps with quality non-slip material and contrasting nosing to reduce risk of falls
- Paint walls either side of steps or stairs in a contrasting colour; deep contrasting bands applied to identify the zigzag of the steps could be part of an exterior colour scheme





## Handrail

*"I need a handrail to guide me coming in and going out of my home"*

### Hints and tips:

- A handrail that contrasts with the exterior wall; could be the same as a front door colour as long as it contrasts with the wall
- A handrail that is tactile and comfortable to touch - not bare metal and could be painted or wood
- Interior handrails inside the main entrance leading to a personal front door are useful



## Ramp

*"I find steps difficult to climb and can slip or trip over them"*

### Hints and tips:

- A ramp with handrails outside the main entrance and exit to the property can help prevent falls and provide easy wheelchair access
- Lighting over a ramp will improve accessibility
- LED lights on the sides of existing ramps will aid access and navigation





## Flooring

*"I have got trouble with my flooring in the entrance"*

### Hints and tips:

- Flooring that contrasts with the walls and skirting inside the front entrance of the building helps orientation
- Flooring should be even and non-slip inside the front door or entrance to aid safety in wet weather
- Fit a flat, absorbent door mat that contrasts with floor and helps mark the entrance and exit
- Repair or replace damaged flooring to avoid trips

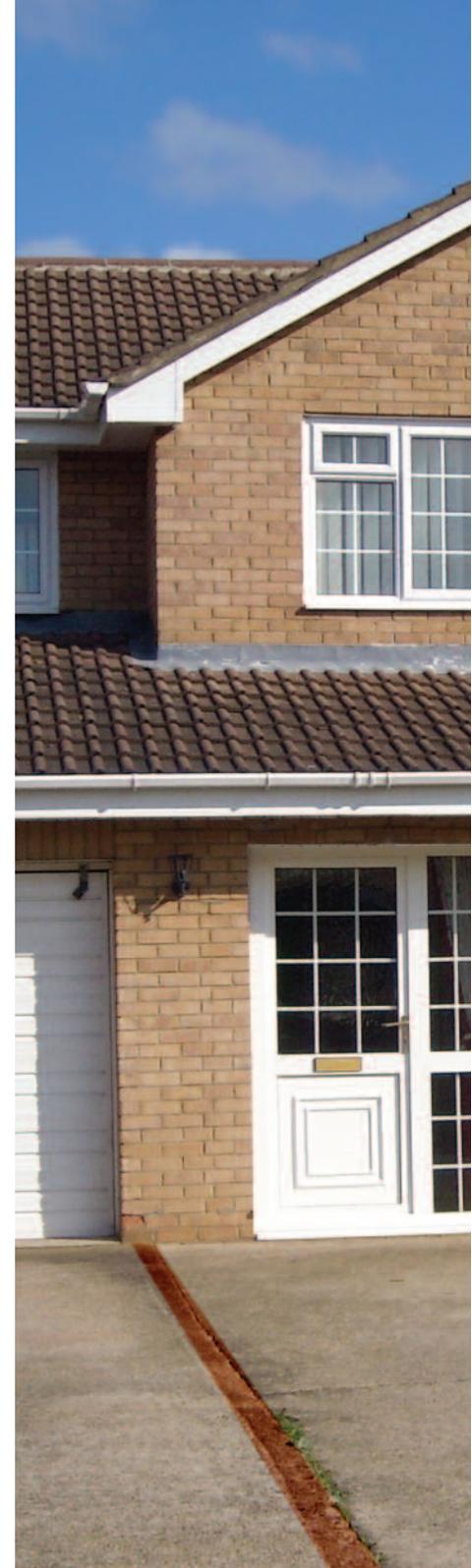


## Paving

*"The path isn't very clear or easy to see"*

### Hints and tips:

- Ensure even level paving outside the entrance or exit to avoid falls
- Paving or pathways should be in a contrasting colour to the grass, gravel or tarmac next to it
- The path should be identifiable from the street paving
- A path or area in front of the home that is a different texture is helpful for identification of own entrance





## Glass doors

*“Glass doors cause me problems; I never know if they are open or not”*

### Hints and tips:

- Mount stickers, signs or contrasting manifestations onto glass door panels
- Mark strips on glass doors to indicate they are open or closed
- Automatic glass doors can have audible sounds or voice when opening or closing
- Touch signs for automatic opening doors should be contrasting and easy to see

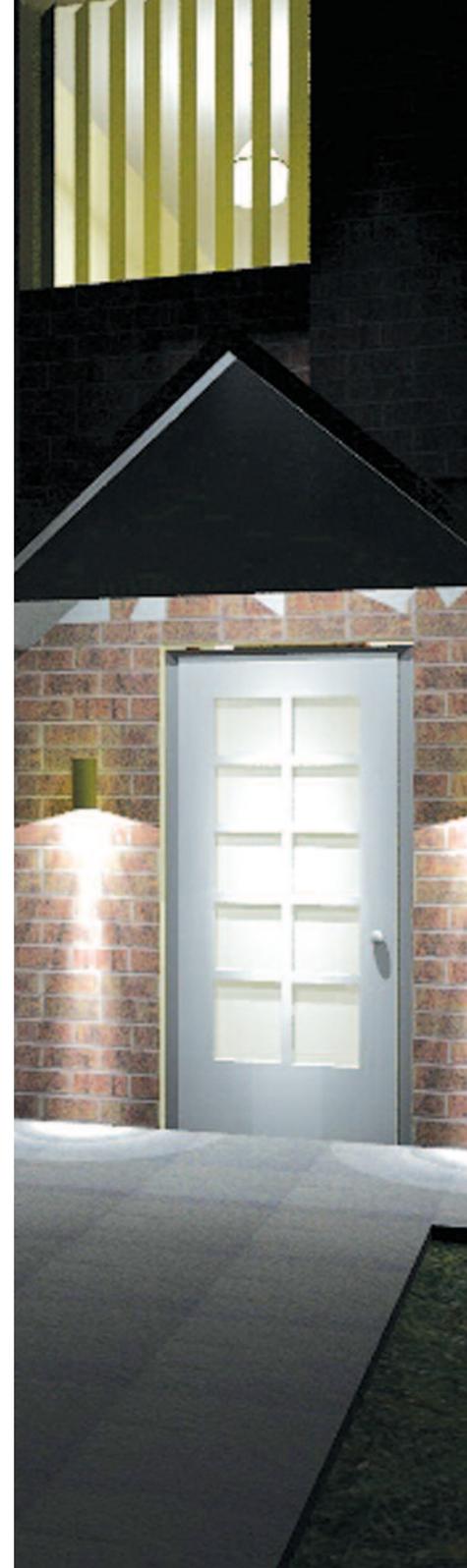


## Navigation lights

*“At night I can’t see my path so I don’t go out”*

### Hints and tips:

- A post lit with LED lights at the front of the property, installed to light up the entrance, which acts as a landmark during the day and night
- Highlight the sides of pathways with luminescent materials or LEDs that can be seen at night
- A light sensor that comes on when entering the area of a property
- Surface any entry path or point with a lighter or darker material from the main street; resin bonded pale chips, or lighter paving

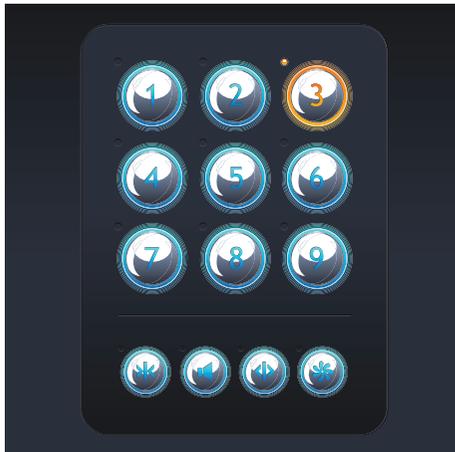


## Lift buttons

*"Lift buttons are always hard for me to use as I cannot see where they are"*

## Hints and tips:

- Buttons should be highlighted with a tactile marker for touch recognition
- Photo-luminescent strips may provide some help in identifying lift buttons
- Panels could be lit so they can be easily located and indicate floors well





## Sources of information and advice

The full report from Kingston University 'Making an entrance: Colour, contrast and the design of entrances to homes of people with sight loss' ISBN 978-1-907684-26-5 is available from the Thomas Pocklington Trust website [www.pocklington-trust.org.uk](http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk)

Thomas Pocklington Trust Good Practice Guide 4 Housing for People with Sight Loss – a practical guide to improving existing homes 2nd edition December 2011 ISBN 978-1-906464-15-8 Available from [www.pocklington-trust.org.uk](http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk)

Thomas Pocklington Trust Good Practice Guide 5 Good Housing Design – Lighting – a practical guide to improving lighting in existing homes March 2010 ISBN 978-1-906464-32-5 Available from [www.pocklington-trust.org.uk](http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk)

**Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)** may be available to help fund the kind of adaptations shown in the checklist. Information about DFG can be accessed at [www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants/overview](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants/overview)

Disabled Facilities Grants are administered by local authorities, which may also have specialist officers and teams to advise and assist people with sight loss. Local council offices and websites will provide further information. (Note: Eligibility for a DFG will depend on your financial situation).

**The Housing Learning and Improvement Network** promotes innovative ideas that enhance the housing choices of older people. [www.housinglin.org.uk](http://www.housinglin.org.uk)

**Foundations** is the national body for home improvement agency and handy person services [www.foundations.uk.com](http://www.foundations.uk.com)

Information about light reflectance values can be accessed at [www.cromocon.com](http://www.cromocon.com)

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