

HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH SIGHT LOSS

A practical guide to improving existing homes



Good Practice Guide 4
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The Wilberforce Trust
Supported Housing, Training and Rehabilitation Services
for People with Visual Impairments

**Housing Learning and
Improvement**
Network

Thomas Pocklington Trust
 Housing and support for
people with sight loss



Acknowledgements

This publication originates from 'Housing for People with Sight Loss: A Thomas Pocklington Trust Design Guide'. The earlier two editions of the good practice guidance were also based on research led by Professor Julienne Hanson at University College London and Dr Geoff Cook at the University of Reading. This third edition has been enhanced by the findings of research carried out by Professor Hilary Dalke and Alessio Corso at Kingston University London and their report 'Making an Entrance: colour, contrast and the design of entrances to the homes of people with sight loss'.

The content and style of the practice guidance have been informed by the views and experiences of people with sight loss. Development of the guidance has also involved consultation with a wide range of professionals and groups, including housing managers and support staff, access consultants, architects and developers, home improvement agencies, occupational therapists, rehabilitation workers, local authority and health specialists and product manufacturers and suppliers.

Pocklington is grateful to all those who have contributed to the research project and development of the guidance.

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About Thomas Pocklington Trust

Thomas Pocklington Trust is a national charity dedicated to delivering positive change for people affected by sight loss.

Research is a central part of Pocklington's work. Each year we fund social and public health research initiatives to identify practical ways to improve the lives of people with sight loss and influence the services and facilities that they use.

Our research priorities are:

- The health and wellbeing of people with sight loss
- Housing and built environments that support the independence of people with sight loss
- Building the capacity of organisations and services that work with people with sight loss to shape research and use research findings.

Good Practice Guides

The Pocklington Good Practice Guide series offers advice and insight based on research projects commissioned and funded by Pocklington. The guides strike a balance between giving the reader information about the background and research on the topic, 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' are used interchangeably.

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 publication provides good practice guidance on improving 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, including occupational therapists, rehabilitation workers, housing and support staff.

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 with sight loss
- the views of managers and support staff working in general and specialist housing.



This icon indicates where further information can be found in the Design Guide. Details of how to access the Design Guide can be found in the Useful Resources section of this publication.



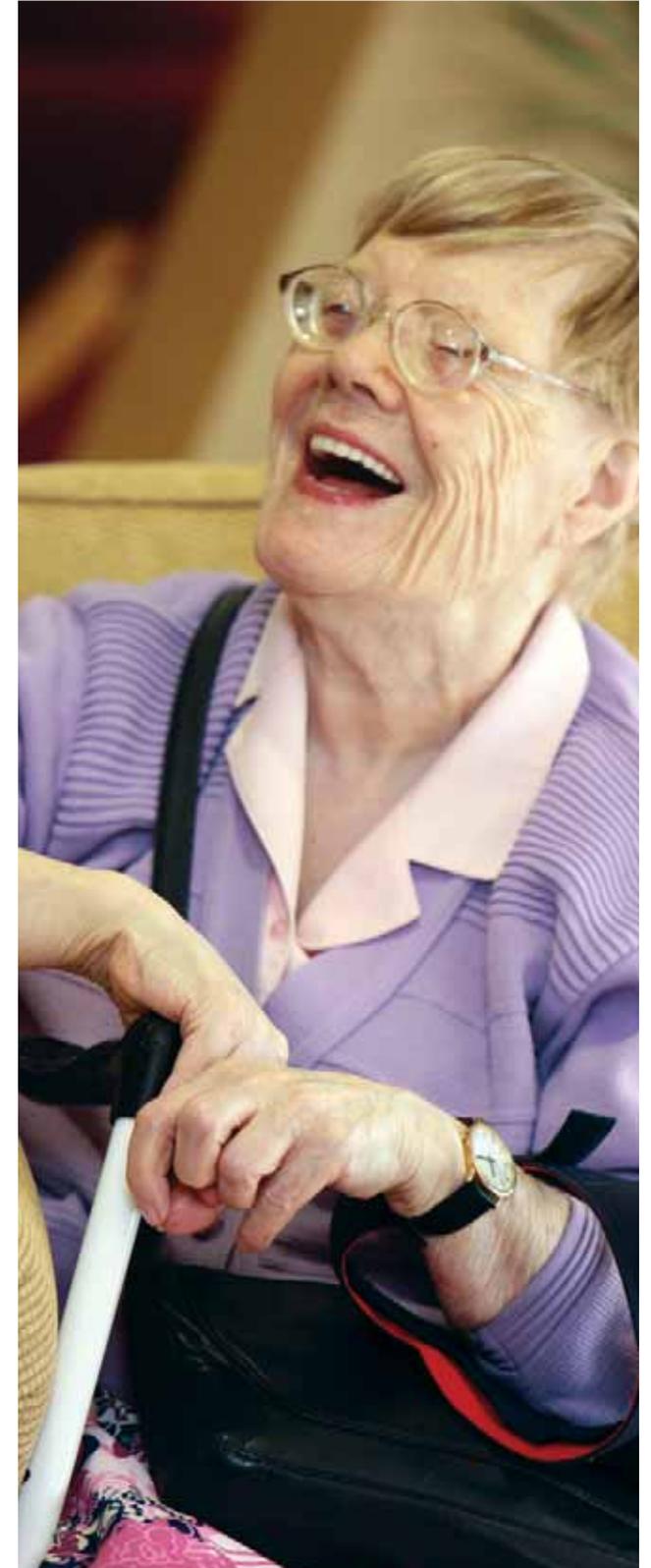
This icon indicates where further information can be found in the Useful Resources section of this publication.

How common is sight loss?

About two million people in the UK have vision impairment that affects their everyday life. Around one in five people aged over 75, and one in two people aged over 90 are living with sight loss. Sight loss is not only experienced by people in older age; over 400,000 working age people (below 65 years of age) in the UK also deal with its effects on a daily basis. 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. As numbers of older people in the population increase, so will the number of people with sight loss – it is predicted that by 2020 the number of people affected will rise to over 2,250,000 and that by 2050 the numbers will double to nearly four million.

Sight loss can have a significant effect on daily living. 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 isn't something that is only for specialists or people with big budgets. A well-designed product or piece of equipment should work for a wide audience and needn't be complicated or expensive. Many people with sight loss who took part in the research that has informed this Guide spoke about problems which could be addressed relatively easily and without undue expense.

The research carried out by Kingston University on doorways and entrances of homes of people with sight loss emphasised this point. The addition of the section on accessibility of doorways and entrances in this edition of the Guide will I am sure prove invaluable to people with sight loss, their relatives and carers as well as housing and sight loss professionals.

The Guide focuses on existing housing and the ways in which adaptations, routine maintenance and refurbishment can improve housing for people with sight loss. It shows what can be done to make any and every home safer, easier to live in and more pleasant for people with sight loss.



Jeremy Porteus, Director, Housing Learning Improvement Network



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4 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 rebuilding 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, although they may not know how to achieve it or about changes that could make a big difference to their lives. People appreciate readily available and accessible 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. Light should be:

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

Pocklington's Good Practice Guide 5 explains how to improve lighting in the home to meet the needs of people with sight loss. 

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 or more 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 finish wall tiles and flooring, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, reduce glare. Lamp shades and vertical blinds prevent glare from lights and windows.

6. Use 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. Older and visually impaired people often have difficulty with adjusting central heating controls. 'Choosing central heating controls and saving energy' is a guide published by Rica and Pocklington which contains useful information on this subject. 





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.

Involving people is an ongoing process

Involving people in decisions about their home is part of a person-centred approach to housing, support and care, and 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, residents' association or reviews of care and support plans, are useful but are seldom the only way to find out people's views about their homes or discuss possible changes. When people are offered genuine opportunities to be involved, they will choose whether, when and how to do so.

Communication

Good communication is at the heart of successfully involving people. Information needs to be provided in the preferred format for each individual. This may be: large print, electronic files, audio, 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.

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.

6 Doorways, entrances, halls and stairways



The Objective

To provide clearly identifiable, safe and uncluttered entrances and doorways to the home. To ensure paths and circulation routes include features that assist navigation, wayfinding and safe movement.

What good practice looks like

Doors and entrances

- An exterior door is painted a colour that contrasts strongly with the front of the building – either lighter or darker.
- A personal door inside a communal main room is painted a different colour from the walls to make it stand out.
- There is 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. 
- 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.
- Callers can be recognised - via clear glazing beside the door, a door viewer, audible caller recognition or door entry system.
- Letterboxes are centred within the door with a 'letter cage' on the inside.
- Clutter is minimised and areas around doorways are kept clear so trip hazards are removed.

Keyholes and locks

- There is good lighting, colour contrast and texture to help find and use keys and locks.
- Keyholes and locks are in a strong contrasting colour to the door or a contrasting metal finish, e.g. on a pale door a darker metal coated keyhole and lock.
- The keyhole or lock has an edge or lip that is easy to identify by touch.
- The existing keyhole and lock are highlighted with a hard tactile marking outline.
- A security lock accepts a key entry in any direction.

Door numbers, bells and knockers

- Door numbers have a high contrast to their background and are large enough to see from a distance.
- There are chrome numbers on a dark door or black numbers on a white door.
- There is a luminescent house number that is clearer to see at night.
- Bells and knockers are matt and contrast with the door.

Door handles

- A consistent method of opening doors is used 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.
- The leading edge of the door is in a colour that contrasts with the rest of the door.
- Door handles are easy to use, contrast strongly with the door and are at a consistent height throughout the home.
- There is a coloured chrome, brass or steel door handle that contrasts with the current door colour; a dark door shows up the bright metal and a light door could have a contrasting coloured handle.
- There is a lever type handle that curves inwards at the edge or has no sharp leading edges.
- There is a door handle at a personal doorway or entrance that is highlighted by luminescent strips, directed lighting or is photo-luminescent.



Walls and flooring

- An exterior wall is painted a lighter or darker colour than the door; a Light Reflectance Value (LRV) difference of at least 50 can mean the door can be seen at a distance. 
- Door colours clearly contrast with the wall and the door frame.
- Doormats are placed in mat wells so that the surface of the mat is level with the surrounding area.
- Flooring contrasts with the walls and skirting inside the front entrance of the building to help orientation.
- Flooring is even and non-slip inside the front door or entrance to aid safety in wet weather.
- Damaged flooring is repaired or replaced to avoid trips.

Corridors and halls

- Corridors and halls are free of obstacles.
- If needed, handrails are circular or have rounded edges, are smooth to touch and are fitted in continuous runs uninterrupted by wall fixings.
- Vertical blinds prevent glare and 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.



8 Doorways, entrances, halls and stairways continued

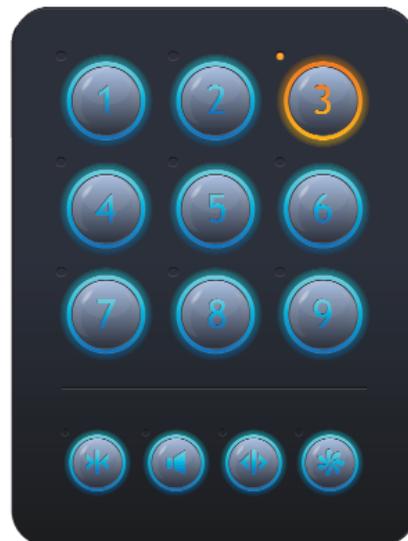


Glass doors

- Stickers or signs are mounted onto glass door panels.
- Strips are marked on glass doors to indicate they are open or closed.
- Automatic glass doors have audible sounds when opening or closing.
- Touch signs contrast with automatic opening doors and are easy to see.

Lift buttons

- Buttons are highlighted with a tactile marker for touch recognition.
- Photo-luminescent strips help to identify lift buttons.
- Good lighting on lift panels ensures that buttons are easily located and floor indicators are easily seen.



Stairs, steps and handrails

- 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.
- Contrasting step nosing is installed on the front edge of steps or stairs. Contrast should be 60 points of LRV difference. 
- A painted line on the edge of a step is in a lighter or darker colour than the step.
- Steps are surfaced with quality non-slip material and contrasting nosing to reduce risk of falls.
- In communal settings, tactile floor surfaces indicate the top and bottom of stairs and steps.
- Windows at the top and bottom of stairs or steps are fitted with vertical blinds.
- Continuous circular or rounded handrails on either side of the stairs have adequate clearance from the wall, are well secured and are in a colour that contrasts with the wall.
- Handrails are comfortable to touch – not bare metal, and could be painted or wood.
- Interior handrails are installed inside the main entrance leading to a personal front door.

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 movement sensors 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, or on stairs and steps, in colours that contrast with the walls.
- 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 tactile stickers onto the wall as the number of the floor.
- Fix letter cages on the backs of front doors.



10 Kitchens, utility and laundry areas



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, these should be at the front of all appliances.
- There are 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 appliances – 'bumpon' or tactile stickers and large print labels can make them easier to use. 

12 Living and dining areas



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.



16 Bathrooms and WCs



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.
- Paving or pathways are in a contrasting colour to the grass, gravel or tarmac next to it.
- The path is identifiable from the street paving.
- A path or area in front of the home is a different texture so a person's individual home entrance can be identified.
- Path surfaces and paving are level 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, sign 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.

Signage and landmarks

- Gates and doors to different properties vary in colour and form.
- Handles, knobs, names and numerals on gates and doors contrast with their background.
- A contrasting landmark is located near the entrance.
- There is a sign for the property or house.
- A highly visible plant tub that can be seen from a distance is located next to the doorway or entrance.
- Posts or gates at the entrance are painted in contrasting colour from their background and adjacent areas.

Plants and gardens

- Planting which helps people find their way has distinctive shapes, colours, smells and textures that indicate different areas and routes.
- Low, rather than high level plants beside paths enhance security and minimise obstacles.
- Garden areas are designed so that people can sit comfortably and find their way safely around.

Parking

- There is enough designated and free parking space for vehicles. It is particularly important to ensure that vehicles do not park with their wheels on paths or gardens.
- 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, fences, gates and patios.
- A post lit with LED lights at the front of the property, installed to light up the entrance, also acts as a landmark during the day and night.
- Sides of pathways are highlighted with luminescent materials or LEDs that can be seen at night
- Entry paths or points are surfaced with a lighter or darker material from the main street such as resin bonded pale chips or lighter paving.

Dog runs

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

Ramps

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

Things you can do now

People may feel that 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 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 passive infrared sensors. 
- Place a plant tub which can be clearly seen from a distance outside the entrance.
- Install a highly visible sign on the external wall of the property.
- Paint metal or wooden posts in a strong contrasting colour from their background.

If dog runs are needed, ask Guide Dogs for advice. 



Assist UK A national network for advice on independent living equipment. Their locally situated centres include exhibitions of products and 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.

College of Occupational Therapists (COT) The College sets the professional and educational standards for the occupational therapy profession and plays a crucial role in promoting the profession and meeting the professional needs of occupational therapy staff in the UK. The COT Specialist Section - Housing provides a forum for occupational therapists and occupational therapy staff that have an interest in housing, inclusive design and accessible home environments. **Website:** www.cot.co.uk

Cromocon The website offers information about a meter which measures light reflectance value (LRV), as well as an LRV app which can be used on iPhone or android. You can also order a contrast guide. A contrast difference between two adjacent surfaces assists people with sight loss to live more independently and is critical for visibility of products, services and buildings.
Website: www.cromocon.com

Disabled Living Foundation A national charity providing impartial advice, information and training on independent living.

Website: www.dlf.org.uk
Email: info@dlf.org.uk
Helpline telephone: 0300 999 0004

Evolve for Vision is a tool for evaluating the design of housing for older people with sight loss and its room by room checklist highlights almost 400 design features relevant to quality of life for older people with sight loss. You can access it by visiting <http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/researchandknowledge/publications/rf36>

Foundations is the national body for Home Improvement Agency and Handypersons Services, providing support to over 200 home improvement and handyperson service providers in England, covering over 80% of local authorities. **Website:** www.foundations.uk.com

Gradus offer a range of stair edging and non-slip surface products.
Website: gradusworld.com

Guide Dogs A UK charity providing mobility and freedom to blind and partially sighted people, campaigning for the rights of people with visual impairment, educating the public about eye care and funding eye disease research.
Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk
Email: guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk
Tel: 0118 983 5555

Local Authorities (LAs) LAs with social services functions may employ vision rehabilitation staff who can provide advice on alterations to the housing of people with sight loss and have 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 belonging to Visionary, a membership organisation for local sight loss charities. They vary in the type and range of services that they offer but all have lots of information and advice and practical solutions to living with sight loss. You can find your nearest local society by visiting www.visionary.org.uk
Email: visionary@visionary.org.uk
Helpline telephone: 0208 417 0942

Rica is a registered charity which publishes free consumer reports based on rigorous research which provide practical information needed by disabled and older consumers. **Website:** www.rica.org.uk

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 these services, local Resource Centres and their 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 and appliances for purchase, such as tactile stickers. **Website:** www.rnib.org.uk
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
Helpline telephone: 0208 417 0942

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

Email: admin@telecare.org.uk

Telephone: 01625 520 320

Thomas Pocklington Trust is a national charity dedicated to delivering positive change for people affected by sight loss. We commission and fund research, including research about housing for people with sight loss. The publication 'Housing for People with Sight Loss: A Thomas Pocklington Trust Design Guide' is the primary source of the guidance in this publication. It is published by IHS BRE Press, ISBN 978-1-84806-025-6, 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 guidance that address issues about housing for people with sight loss and offers information on lighting and design at home. Some of the key publications on this subject which have also informed the new edition of this Good Practice Guide are:

Research Findings 39 Making an Entrance: Colour, contrast and the design of entrances to homes of people with sight loss. This easy to read document offers ideas, advice and guidance on action which may be taken to improve accessibility in the design of entrances and support the independence of people with sight loss.

It is supported by the **Making an Entrance checklist** which pinpoints key areas that cause problems for visually impaired people when entering their homes and offers hints and tips on how to address these issues. The full research report from Kingston University London, on which these two publications are based, is available from Pocklington on request.



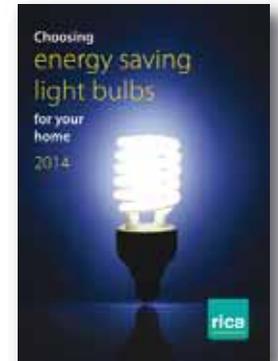
Good Practice Guide 5 'Good Housing Design – Lighting: A practical guide to improving lighting in existing homes' explains how to improve lighting to meet the needs of people with sight loss and is based on Pocklington's extensive research work into lighting the homes of visually impaired people.



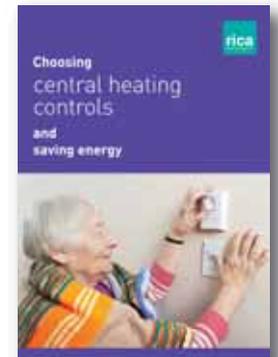
Good Practice Guide 6 'Assistive Technology: A practical guide to assistive technology in the home' sets out how assistive technology may be used to support people with sight loss to manage their home and work surroundings more effectively and live more independently.



Choosing Energy Saving Light Bulbs for Your Home is a joint publication with Rica, the consumer research organisation for older and disabled people. It explains the different types of energy-saving light bulbs that are available and the best use for each.



Choosing Central Heating Controls and Saving Energy is a joint publication with Rica. The guide reviews some central heating controls that visually impaired people may find easy to operate and gives advice on potential problems. There are also tips on saving on heating bills and on how to pay for energy-saving home improvements.



All of these publications are free to download from the Pocklington website www.pocklington-trust.org.uk. in PDF and large print Word formats. Hard copies, audio CD and Braille versions can be ordered by contacting research@pocklington-trust.org.uk or by phoning 020 8995 0880.

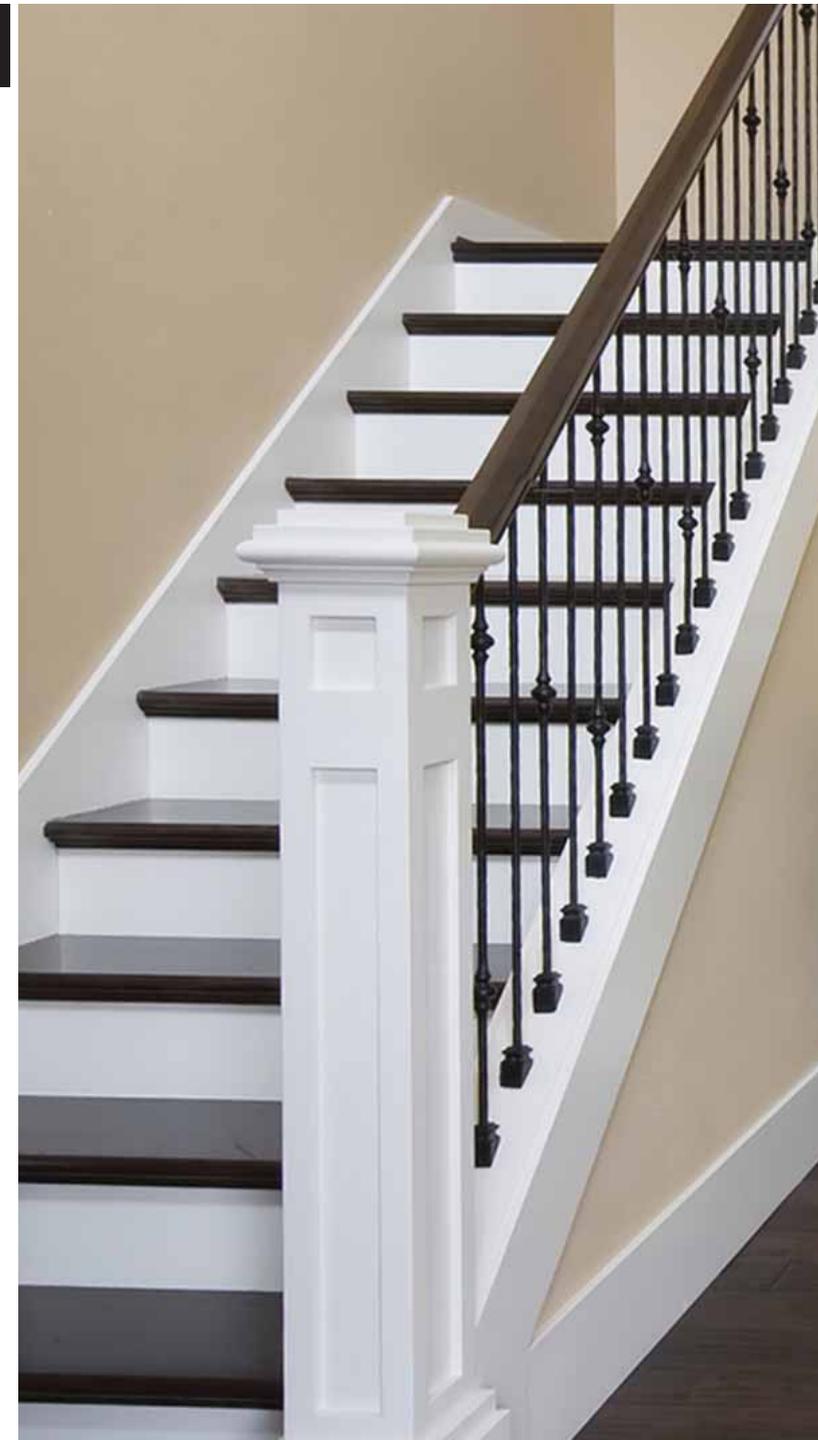
22 Checklist: Doorways, entrances, halls and stairways

Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Is there adequate lighting at the entrances?		
Do doors have a contrast colour on their leading edge?		
Are doors painted in matt or satin finish?		
Does door furniture contrast with the door?		
Are doors painted in a contrasting colour with walls and door frame?		
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 corridors and hallways free of obstacles or hazards?		
If needed, are there continuous, rounded handrails in a contrasting colour in corridors?		
Are handrails uninterrupted by wall support fixings?		

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 vertical blinds fitted on windows, especially at the ends of corridors and/or the top and bottom of stairs?		
Do stairs have contrasting step nosing or painted lines on edges?		
Do external steps have non-slip surface?		
Are lever-type handles used on the doors?		
Are stairs enclosed on the underside?		
Is the back of the step enclosed?		
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?		



24 Checklist: Kitchen, utility and laundry areas

Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Does the kitchen area have a logical layout?		
Is the kitchen area free of 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)?		
Is there sufficient lighting at desks and work stations?		
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?		
Are there sufficient electrical sockets adjacent to television, telephone, desk and work stations?		
Is there sufficient space for a bed for a guide dog?		



26 Checklist: Bedrooms

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?		





28 Checklist: Bathrooms and WCs

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)?		
Are there vertical blinds?		
Have shiny/reflective surfaces been kept to a minimum?		

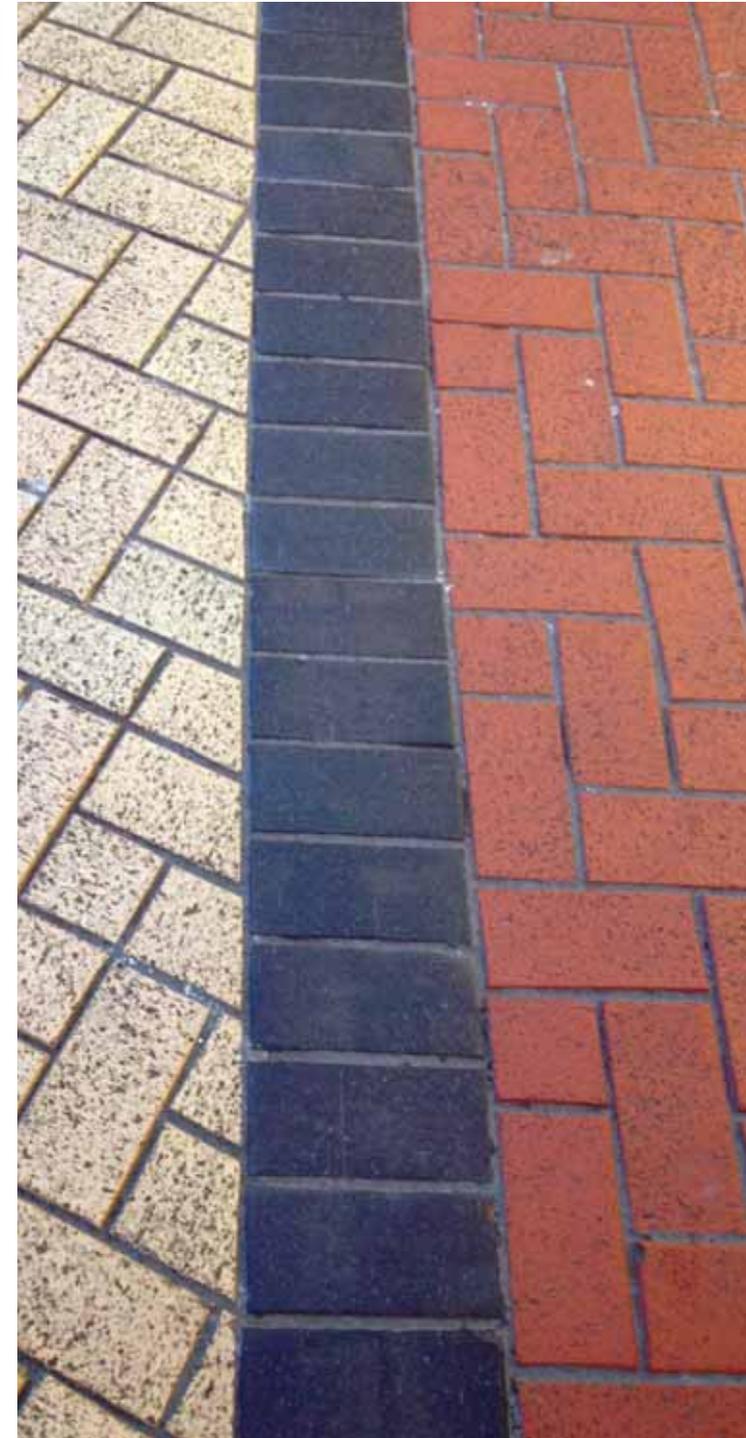


Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Are grab rails in place to meet the needs of the current user/s?		
Is the shower tray recessed?		
Does the bath have hand grips?		
Do the bath and shower have non-slip surfaces?		
Are there systems to keep soap and toiletries in the right place?		



30 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, routes and doorways?		
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?		



Questions	Yes/no/ partly	Urgent action required?
Is there a clearly visible sign for the property?		
Are existing metal or wooden gates and posts painted in contrasting colours to their backgrounds?		



Notes

Authors

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

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Thomas Pocklington Trust



Housing and support for
people with sight loss

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