

Support Visually Impaired People in refuge spaces



A toolkit to provide
**accessible domestic
abuse support**
for blind and partially
sighted people



Contents



Page 3 - Introduction

Page 4 - The importance of accessibility

Page 5 - Building Accessibility

Page 6 - Communication

Page 7 - Technology, Aids and Adaptations

Page 8 - The Bigger Picture

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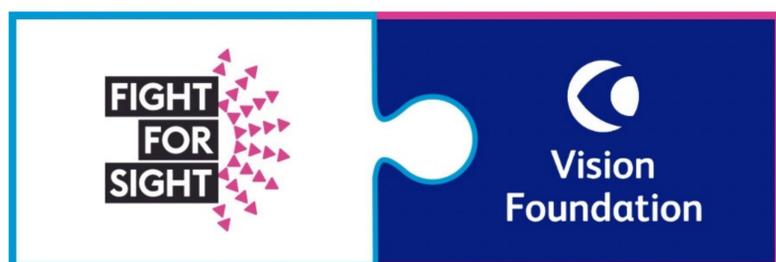


This toolkit has been co-produced with blind and partially sighted people who have experienced challenges in accessing domestic abuse support, particularly in a refuge setting.

It has been designed to enable domestic abuse charities to feel confident supporting visually impaired victims and survivors so that your services are fully accessible to them.

It will provide you with information, advice, and guidance as well as who to contact if you need more support.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the production of this toolkit and our funder The Vision Foundation for supporting this work.



Why **accessibility** is important

At least **1 in 12*** visually impaired people in the UK is estimated to be a victim or survivor of domestic abuse, translating to **188,000** likely victims or survivors.

More broadly disabled people are **three times** more likely to experience domestic abuse.

Blind and partially sighted victims and survivors experience many of the same abusive behaviours as fully sighted people, but they also face **additional forms** of abuse such as the abuser moving things around the house so that the victim or survivor trips or is unable to find items they need or withholding support like sighted guiding or accessible equipment.

Those with a visual impairment might have a **dependence** on individuals for support, which may include the person perpetrating the abuse. This can result in complex **risk-benefit** negotiations for victims/survivors.

It is **difficult** for blind and partially sighted people to access information on domestic abuse and domestic abuse services aimed at the general public since much of this information is in printed format or on inaccessible websites.



"I think if VI people were seen as equals, we would be at a bigger advantage of not falling into the trap of a domestic violence relationship."



Building Accessibility

If a visually impaired person came to use your service or refuge, how accessible is it? Some small changes can make a big difference for blind and partially sighted people, here are our top tips.

How to make your building accessible

Are entry points and buzzers easily identified?

You could make sure any colours contrast against each other so they are more visible and have clear signage to explain where the buzzer is located.

Is your signage clear?

Again we recommend making signage colour contrasting e.g. black text on a yellow background, with text size 16 at least and Ariel font.

Is there sufficient lighting in each room?

Rooms should be as light and bright as possible to help people make the most of their sight but remember sunlight can also cause glare, an option to block it out could help.

Are communal areas accessible to VI people?

Is the floor clear of hazards such as boxes, and is everything kept in the same place so visually impaired people know where to find them?

Can you give VI people a sufficient orientation of the building?

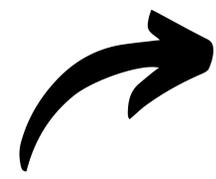
It is important they clearly understand the layout of the building, offering to take them around the site, slowly while explaining clearly the layout, will help.

Are you linked with your local sight loss support service to help you with an accessibility audit?

You can find contact details at the back of this toolkit.



Communication



Scan the QR code
on each page for
an audio version.

How could a visually impaired person learn about your services?

There are some simple steps you can take to make your communications more accessible.

Use at least size 16 text in a bold, clear font such as Arial, and think about how colour contrast can make words more **visible** or **difficult** to see.

Do you make information available in accessible formats? You could record an audio version of your leaflets on a Smartphone and upload it to your website or use a QR code like the one at the top of this page. Your local sight loss charity may be able to help you produce a braille version of your important information such as where to seek help.

Are your website and social media channels accessible? One easy change you can make is ensuring any downloadable information is available in Word rather than as a PDF as it's more compatible with technology such as text-to-speech readers.

Do you rely on visual communication such as images, diagrams, or photos online rather than letting words tell the story?

Have you checked your website text? It can be adjusted for colour, size, and contrast.

Our top tip is:

Make sure your documents are clutter-free, bold and easy to read.

What information do you record on people who access your services?

Some people with a visual impairment may never have accessed any support, don't consider themselves disabled, or want to admit it if they do when they are already in a vulnerable situation. Words matter, perhaps instead of a form asking if someone has a disability, you could ask if they have any additional needs you could support them with.



Technology, aids, and Adaptations

There are a range of aids and adaptations which can improve the independence of people living with sight loss.

Mobile phones

All smartphones can be adjusted so they are more accessible for blind and partially sighted people. Options include using text to speech voiceover, voice activation for texts and apps, and altering the colour contrast and size of text so it is easier to read. Your local sight loss charity may offer digital support for those trying to get to grips with a new phone.

Adapting equipment



Some easy changes you can make include:

- Using colour contrasting mugs to make sure they stand out in the kitchen.
- Use tactile markings or bright fluorescent tape to identify potential hazards. If you have furniture, you can use contrasting colours on the walls and carpets to make them easier to see.
- On beds choose a duvet that's a different colour to your carpet to help distinguish between them.
- Use elastic bands on bottles such as shampoo or conditioner or red or brown sauce so those with low vision know which is which.

There is also a range of low-vision equipment from extra lighting and talking clocks to video magnifiers and kitchen equipment like liquid level indicators and colour contrasting chopping boards.

The bigger picture

Feedback

If someone is struggling to access your services, do you have a clear communication channel and mechanism in place for people to feedback on the gaps or ways you could do things differently?

Confidentiality

Does your team understand who to share information with? Can your team recognise that carers may be the perpetrators of abuse? How can you ensure that someone who is reliant on a carer has an opportunity to disclose that they are a victim of domestic abuse?

Person-centred support

The most important thing to remember is that everyone is different! If you're unsure how best to support someone, the best thing you can do is just ask.

Guiding

Have you considered how you would support someone that may require a guide to get from one place to another? Your local sight loss charity could support with training your team. Do you have suitable facilities for someone with a guide dog? Do you consider induction in your facilities?

Who to contact if you need additional support for a visually impaired domestic abuse victim



Local sight loss charity
contact information

Local Rehabilitation Officers
for the Visually Impaired:

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer
support at your local
hospital: