

Accessible Bus Travel for Blind and Partially Sighted People



“I have to forward plan my journey, sometimes the apps don’t work, or the website to check a timetable isn’t accessible. I wait at the bus stop hoping that the bus is going to stop for me. I worry that the driver won’t announce a stop when I’ve arrived at my destination, and I clock watch all day with the same anxieties for my journey home.”
(Iris, East Sussex Sight Loss Council Volunteer)

Introduction



Sight Loss Councils, led by blind and partially sighted people with lived experience of sight loss, have produced this presentation.

Sight Loss Councils are funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust.

Aims and Objectives



By the end of this session you will:

- Understand the challenges of bus travel for blind and partially sighted people
- Know how to recognise someone who is blind or partially sighted
- Be better equipped to support blind and partially sighted passengers
- Learn about different sight conditions
- Have a better understanding of how to sight guide a blind or partially sighted person.

Statistics



? How many people live with vision impairment in the UK?

- a) 1 million
- b) 2 million
- c) 3 million
- d) 4 million

✓ = b)

In 2024, it was suggested that just over 2 million people live with a vision impairment (a sight condition not correctable with glasses, contact lenses or surgery).

Statistics continued



? There were 3.7 billion bus journeys taken in Great Britain in 2023. What percentage of these journeys were concessionary travel (elderly or disabled, and youth concessions)?

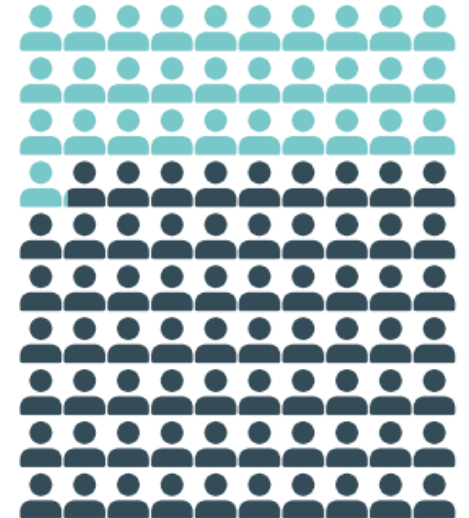
- a) 18%
- b) 25%
- c) 31%
- d) 39%



= c)

According to the Department for Transport's (DfT) annual survey of local bus operators, in the year ending March 2023, total concessionary journeys (elderly or disabled, and youth concessions) made up 31.1% (1053 million passenger journeys).

Source: [Bus Statistics - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/bus-statistics)



Buses are a Lifeline



Linn,
East Sussex Sight Loss Council Volunteer

Eye Health



? How many people are estimated to have a vision impairment in 2050?

- a) 3 million
- b) 4 million
- c) 5 million
- d) 6 million

✓ = b)

According to RNIB, it is predicted that 4 million people will be living with a vision impairment by 2050. This is due to people living longer and sight loss being more prevalent in older people.

Early diagnosis is essential to prevent avoidable sight loss. Visiting an optician for regular eye tests is vital for your eye health.

An Accessible Bus Journey



Sight Loss
Councils



What makes an accessible bus journey?

Accessible bus travel is really important to blind and partially sighted people. It's not just the bus that needs to be accessible, the bus driver plays a huge part too. The following video shows people with lived experience important to them.

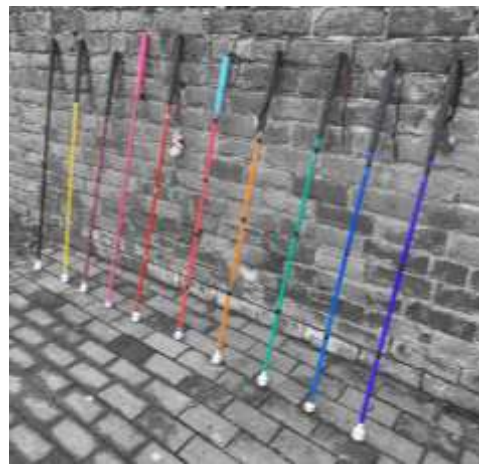


Recognising Blind and Partially Sighted People



? How might you recognise someone who is blind or partially sighted?

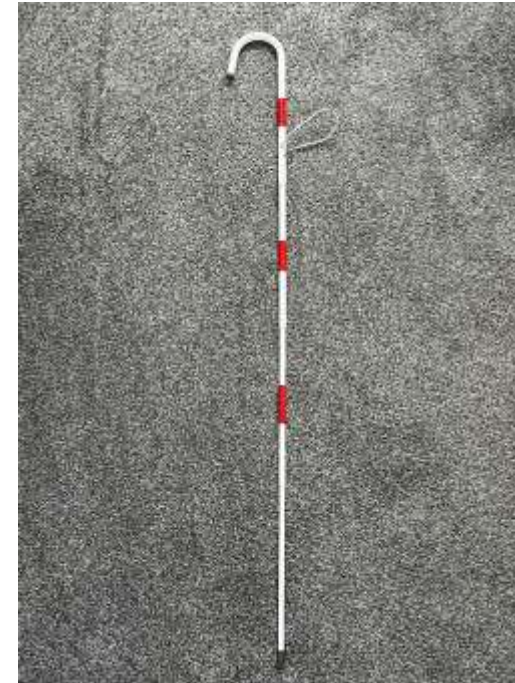
✓ There are lots of different types of mobility aids used by blind and partially sighted people.



Dual Sensory Impairments



People with a dual sensory impairment would use the same mobility aids but these would have additional red markings. This indicates that the person has a sight and hearing impairment.



Dual Sensory Impairments

– Additional Support



Sight Loss
Councils



Someone with dual sensory loss may require a bit more support. This might include:

- Turning off the bus engine whilst they board (reduces background noise)
- Speaking clearly and a little slower, but don't shout
- Keeping your face visible
- Making your lip patterns clear without over-exaggerating
- Using gestures and facial expressions to support what you are saying.

Eyesight Conditions



? Can you name any eyesight conditions?

✓ There are hundreds of conditions and they all present in different ways. Some common conditions include:

- Macular Degeneration
- Glaucoma
- Cataracts
- Diabetic Retinopathy.

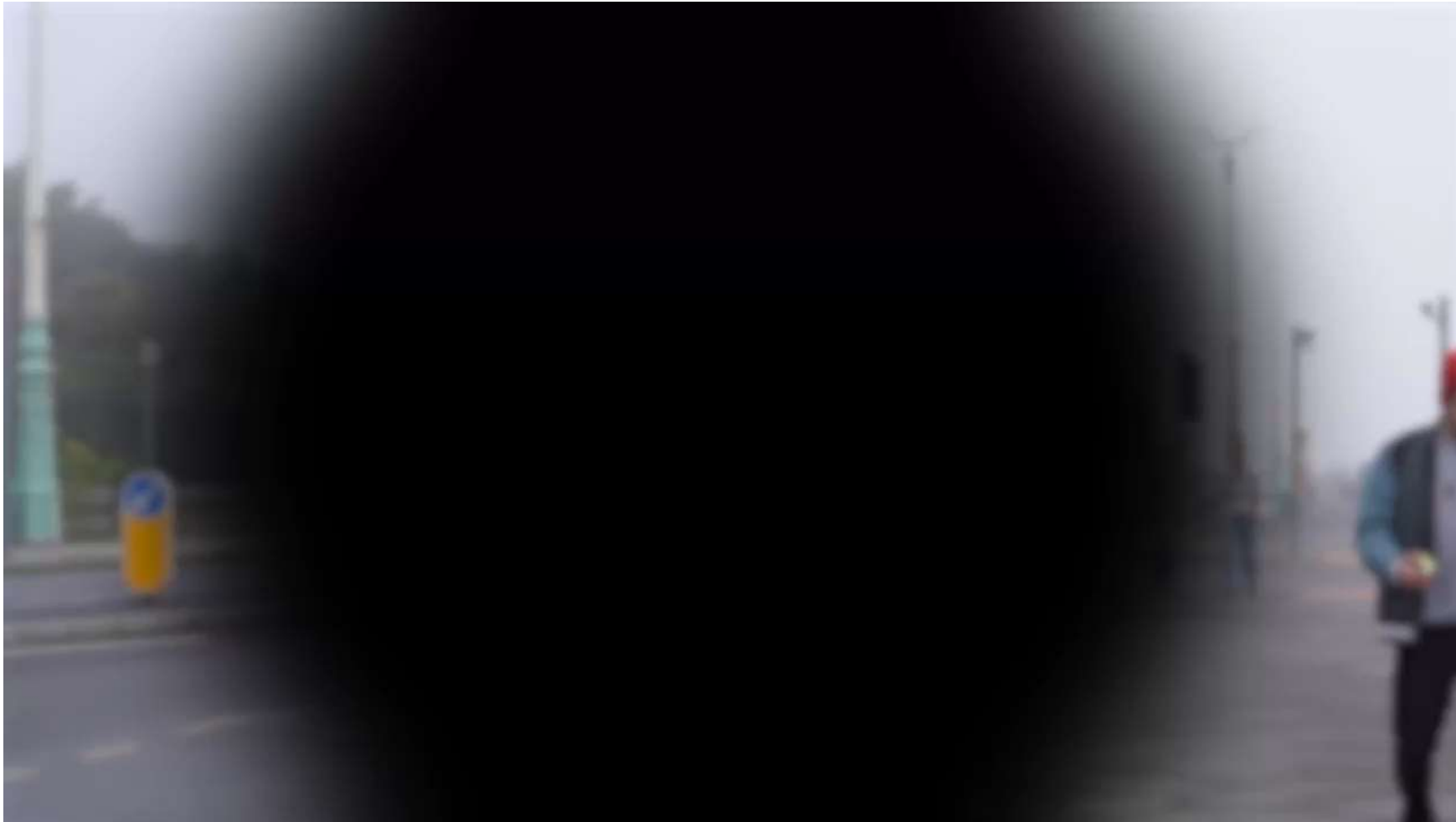
But you don't need to worry about the condition....



Clear Vision



Central Vision Loss



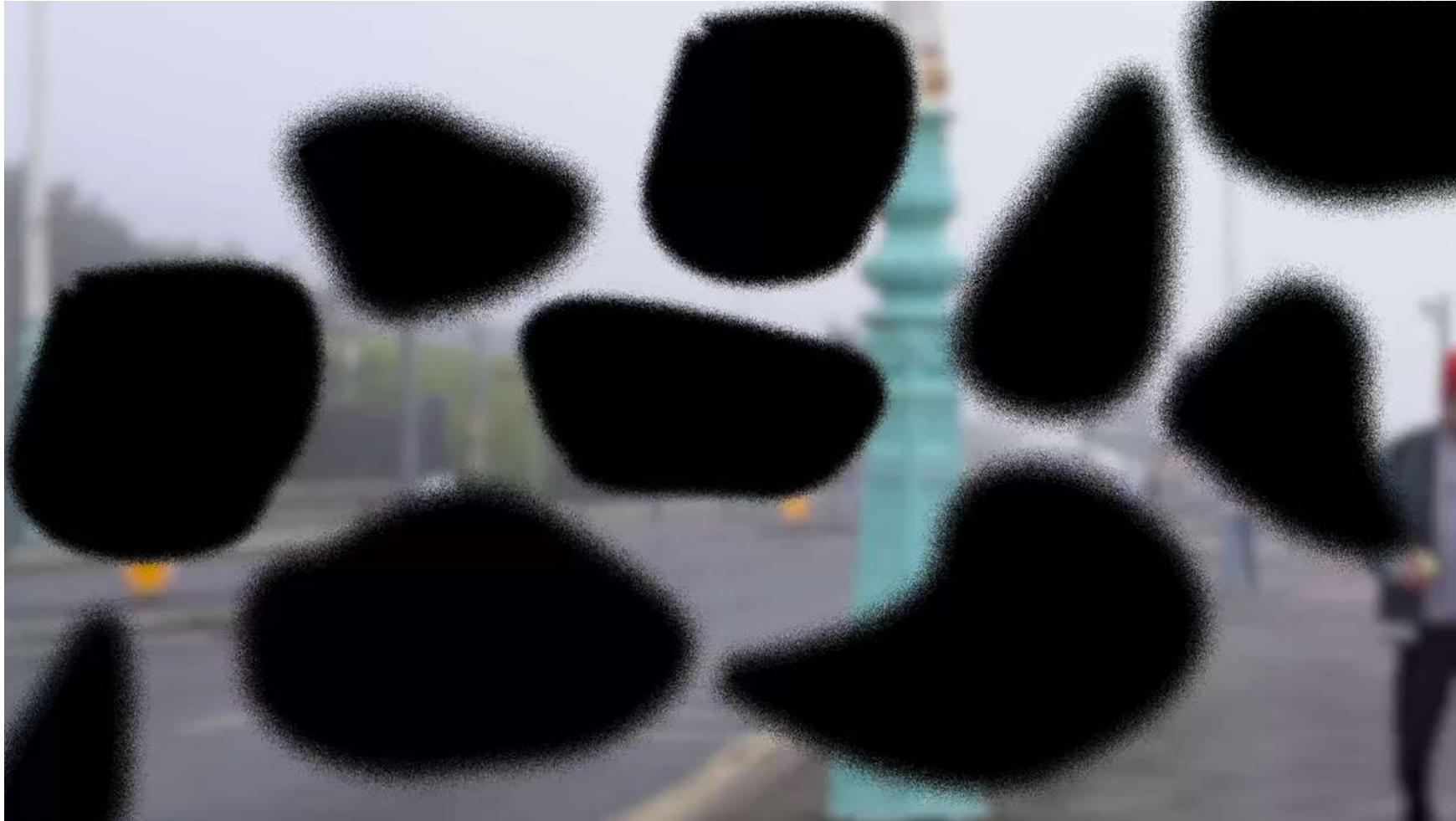
Peripheral Vision Loss (Tunnel Vision)



Misty Vision



Patchy/Blurry Vision



Light Perception Only



Language



People are registered as either severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted).

Following a Thomas Pocklington Trust consultation, the preferred term identified was blind and partially sighted people.

Other terminology used includes sight loss, sight impaired, vision impaired and visually impaired.

How people choose to describe themselves in relation to their eye condition is individual and the term they use will depend on their personal preference.

Communication



Amrit,
North London Sight Loss Council Volunteer

Sight Guiding



There may be occasions where you need to guide a blind or partially sighted person, perhaps to support someone with crossing a road or with finding a seat on the bus.

There is a correct technique for guiding a blind or partially sighted person. The following video demonstrates this technique.



See and Stop



? Why is it important to stop the bus if you see someone who is blind or partially sighted waiting at the bus stop?

✓ Blind and partially sighted people are unlikely to see a bus approaching which makes it difficult, sometimes impossible, to know when to put their hand out to indicate that they want the bus to stop.

Stopping the bus without someone needing to wave or put their hand out means that blind and partially sighted people are more relaxed when waiting for a bus. When you can't see or have little vision, it can be very stressful not knowing whether the bus will stop. Just like other people, missing a bus could mean that they're late for work, an appointment or prevent them from getting on with their day. In some cases, there might not be another bus for an hour or longer, so it could really spoil their day.

Speak and Support



? Why is it important to speak clearly and support a blind or partially sighted passenger?

✓ Blind and partially sighted people usually rely more heavily on audible cues and descriptions. Buses can be busy and noisy which often makes it harder to hear. Some passengers may also have a hearing impairment so speaking clearly is essential to ensure they understand you.

Taking the bus when you have a vision impairment is much harder and can be frightening, disorientating and stressful. Many blind and partially sighted people feel anxious about travelling and the challenges they could face on a journey. Offering the right support can make a huge difference and allow a blind or partially sighted person to feel safe, confident and travel independently.

Helping Blind and Partially Sighted Passengers



Sight Loss
Councils



Information



Sources of further information:

Thomas Pocklington Trust: www.pocklington.org.uk/

Sight Loss Councils: www.sightlosscouncils.org.uk/

Sight Loss Councils, funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust, are regional groups led by blind and partially sighted people. Together, they work with organisations to ensure what they do is accessible and inclusive.

Thomas Pocklington Trust is a national sight loss charity. We offer support across our key priority areas: education, employment, health, and inclusive communities. Our work is deeply rooted in the blind and partially sighted community, prioritising their voices and lived experiences, fostering authenticity, and positioning us as leaders of positive change.

See and Stop, Speak and Support

