# Tops Tips for accessible signage and wayfinding in NHS and social care settings

Whether you are improving, moving, refurbishing or designing and building new environments, ensuring signage and wayfinding is fully inclusive is key to any successful environment. There are many resources to support you including the following key documents:

* [RIBA inclusive design guide](https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/inclusive-design-overlay-to-riba-plan-of-work). Practical guidance to excel in inclusive design at all stages of a build project, including role and responsibilities of an Inclusive design lead at the different stages.
* [Wayfinding Guide.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/148500/Wayfinding.pdf) Aimed at the NHS, this supersedes HTM 65 Signs. The document covers the basic principles of good wayfinding, signage and a useful checklist when making changes or designing from scratch. New developments in digital signage are excluded so see top tips.
* Sign design guide: a guide to inclusive signage, UKAAF, 2004 with [update](http://www.ukaaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/G029-UKAAF-Sign-Design-Guide-Additional-Information-July-2021.pdf), 2021.

The top tips below compliment the resources above and should be read in conjunction with the suggested documents. These tips provide a simple go to list of practical tips that should be incorporated in any wayfinding and signage scheme and are aimed NHS and social care professionals, engaging with estates, facilities, architects, engineers and builders.

## Top tips: wayfinding

* Invest in an Inclusive design lead (champion or external consultant) to support the development of a wayfinding strategy if you don’t already have one.
* Use a checklist to audit current and proposed wayfinding changes. The Wayfinding guide has a useful checklist which can be used / adapted.
* Include services users in any changes. For new / complex projects set up an inclusive design user group. For small projects such as moving a service within a building you may want to ask a small number of service users themselves, their families, and carers.
* ‘Walk’ the proposed routes together – both physically and virtually, capturing feedback to make changes.
* When designing wayfinding solutions and signage make sure they are fully accessible. [Navilens](https://www.navilens.com/en/), for example, provides digital wayfinding solutions for people with sight loss which compliments traditional printed signage and wayfinding systems.
* Listen to feedback, test and test again, even when you have made changes.

## Top tips: Signage

* The placing of signs should be consistent around the building in terms of height and position. The signage will need to be placed at a height that will suit wheelchair users and children (1400mm from floor).
* Information and directional signs should be provided in locations such as entrance foyers, reception area, lift landings and junctions in circulation routes.
* Signs should highlight key facilities such as toilets, waiting areas and lift locations.
* Do not place signs where likely obstructions may be in place, i.e., when a door is held open it conceals the sign.
* Light coloured text and symbols on a dark background are the preferred option.
* The sign board should contrast against its background. If not achievable then a visually contrasting border should be placed around the sign.
* Do not surround the sign with visual clutter or key wayfinding messages will be difficult to receive.
* Keep sign messages simple and concise. Ideally – maximum of 12 to 14 letters per line / 2 to 3 words per line.
* Wording and use of pictures should be consistent throughout the building / site.
* Signs can be lit – diffused light fittings that do not cause glare on the signs should be used.
* Digital signs / maps / flat screens and kiosks are being increasingly used in health and care environments to share information, signpost people to services and as part of wayfinding. It is important that where possible systems are fully accessible and complementary systems may need to be put in place e.g., Navilens, reception desks etc.

**Need more advice and support?**

* RNIB Business Services can support you with before and after accessibility audits for both buildings, websites, patient portals, apps etc and can provide a range of specialist support. Contact [RNIB Business Services](https://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/business-professionals/) or call 01733 375370
* Some hospitals have Eye Care Liaison Officers (ECLOs) who work with the Ophthalmology teams providing information, advice, and support to people affected by sight loss. ECLOs can provide links to people with lived experience to support project development.

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