

R N I B



See differently

Confident Living

Travel



The Sight Advice FAQ

The Sight Advice FAQ answers questions about living with sight loss, eye health or being newly diagnosed with a sight condition. It is produced by RNIB in partnership with many other sight loss organisations. sightadvicefaq.org.uk



Contents

- 5** About this guide
- 6** Walking
- 15** Using public transport
- 19** Buses
- 27** Coaches
- 28** Trams
- 29** Community transport
- 30** Trains
- 34** Taxis and mini cabs
- 40** Travelling by car
- 42** London transport
- 48** Travelling abroad
- 51** Further information
- 54** RNIB Booklet Series



About this guide

Walking to shops, catching a bus, train, taxi or going on holiday can be challenging when you have sight loss. In this leaflet, we've put together information about travel services and the assistance that's available, along with useful tips to help you get out and about confidently.

The services we mention in this leaflet are available nationally. If you want to know what local services are available in your area, an easy way to find out is through an online listings directory called the Sightline Directory, which is run by RNIB. You can access the Sightline Directory for free at **sightlinedirectory.org.uk**

If you have a query about something that hasn't been covered in this leaflet, please get in touch with us. We're ready to help, just give us a call or drop us an email.

RNIB Helpline
0303 123 9999
helpline@rnib.org.uk

Walking

Making that first step outside of the door can be daunting if you're worried about your ability to get out and about, especially if you have recently lost your sight. But, there is help available – such as the mobility training mentioned further on – which will help you walk outside with more confidence.

There are various accessible street features that can help you to get around safely too. An example is tactile paving, which can be felt either under foot or by a cane. 'Blister' paving indicates when there is crossing, and 'corduroy' paving tells you when there are stairs.

Mobility training

If you're struggling to get around because of your sight loss, you are entitled to mobility training from your local social services department. This training will cover things like making regular journeys, local transport routes and how to use the environment and mobility devices to help you get around safely and independently.

Mobility aids

There are many products and aids that can help you to travel independently, including:

- canes
- mobile GPS devices
- navigation apps
- guide dogs.

Canes

There are three kinds of canes for people with sight loss: the symbol cane, the guide cane and the long cane.

With a symbol cane, you simply hold it rather than use it to find obstacles in front of you. As the name suggests, it's a way of letting other people know that you're blind or partially sighted. It's particularly useful in busy or crowded places as other people who see the cane should take a bit more care not to bump into you. You might also find that you get more offers of assistance from staff and members of the public because they can see that you have sight loss more easily.

A guide cane not only lets people know you have sight loss, but can be used to find obstacles in front of you. You hold it diagonally across your

body or downwards to detect kerbs or steps. Guide canes are waist high.

A long cane is longer than a guide cane. They are available with various tips, such as roller tips, roller ball tips and pencil tips, to assist you with getting around safely. You sweep it from side to side or tap the ground ahead of you.

A long cane can give you a great deal of information on the terrain ahead as well as warn you about the obstacles in front of you.

Before using a long cane or a guide cane, you should receive training from your local social services department or a local charity. Visit our Sightline Directory to find your nearest one.

If you have a hearing impairment as well as sight loss, red and white banded canes let other people know that you have dual sensory loss.

Mobile GPS devices

Global Positioning System (GPS) devices and software are available to give you information about your current location and

how to get to your destination. These often use a combination of maps and audible directions to help with navigation.

The Trekker Breeze is a popular, handheld standalone device that verbally announces streets, landmarks, tubes, bus stops, restaurants and other places of interest around you. You can also record routes to your favourite destinations and save locations.

**"My Trekker Breeze is fantastic! We take it everywhere. We went to Bangor last year and the sense of independence with that thing is amazing. You can put a landmark in and you can walk anywhere you want."
Cathy Harris**

Another good device is the BrailleNote, a small portable computer. If you install GPS software, the BrailleNote will provide details of your directions either through braille or by reading it aloud.

As the BrailleNote is a computer, you can also use it for word processing, emails and many other functions, and you can choose between a braille or a QWERTY keyboard version.

Navigation apps

If you have a smartphone, you can use a navigation app to help you find your way. There are many different ones available for different types of phones. Google Maps is a free and commonly used app. It includes walking navigation, with notifications of turnings delivered through vibration or voice guidance. Google Maps comes pre-installed on Android phones and is also available for iPhones.

"I love Google Maps and Google Street View. Before, I often wouldn't have been able to go somewhere new alone. I would have got lost. Now I can research where I'm going, look it up, track myself as I walk, and receive directions."

Natalie Doig

If you're an iPhone user, its in-built Apple Maps feature can verbally inform you of your location, the direction you're travelling and landmarks nearby. You can also speak your destination instead of typing it in if you're an English speaker.

Another alternative for iPhone users is the RNIB Navigator app, which helps you plan a route from your current location to addresses or

points of interests. The location screen will show you the direction you're facing within the map, as well as verbally tell you about junctions, road crossings and other important information to help you get around safely. RNIB Navigator app is subscription based – you can find out more by calling our Helpline.

For Android smartphone users, the NowNav app can provide directions and information about your surroundings. It will continuously announce the nearest street address and any nearby crossings. NowNav is a paid-for app.

There is also a wide range of useful mobility products available from RNIB and other organisations. To find out more, visit our shop at **shop.rnib.org.uk** or contact our Helpline.

Good to know

If you'd like to get help with using technology – from navigating with a smartphone, sending emails on the go and more – RNIB's Technology Support Squad can support you. Come to a local Online Today event to help build your confidence and skills with smartphones, tablets and e-readers.

To find out more, call our Helpline
or visit rnib.org.uk/online-today



Guide dogs

A guide dog can be an invaluable mobility aid, but they're not always suitable for everyone. If you think you'd like a guide dog, contact Guide Dogs to discuss your situation. Visit [guidedogs.org.uk](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk) or call **0118 983 5555**.

"I started training with my guide dog, and it's been fantastic. I wouldn't 'be' without her. Her name is Unity but 'Uni' for short. She's a sweetheart and she comes with me to the gym every morning. She tags along with me everywhere, my friends love her. She's just like part of the family really. She's amazing and she's so good at her job as well. She's a kindhearted soul. She hasn't asked for much apart from a carrot and a run every so often!"
Emily Davison

Good to know

There are a number of local schemes that offer travel assistance to blind and partially sighted people. This may include people travelling with you to the shops or travelling as part of an organised group. To find out if any schemes exist in your area, contact our Helpline or visit the Sightline Directory.

Another travel assistance scheme is called My Guide, run by Guide Dogs. With My Guide, they select a trained volunteer or a friend or family member to help support you in order to achieve mobility goals. This could be improving fitness, building confidence, accessing services in your community or gaining confidence on public transport. For more information about My Guide, call **0845 372 7499** or email **myguide@guidedogs.org.uk**

Using public transport

Most people with sight loss use public transport. All public transport providers have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make their services accessible.

Know your rights

There are some basic services that all travel operators should be offering you as part of their commitment to good customer service:

- Information about your journey, including timetables, ticket information and details about how to book assistance in a range of ways, such as by telephone, online and in print.
- Accessible ways to purchase your ticket, which includes ticket machines and counters that are easy to use.
- Stations and stops that are easy to find your way around, for example with a good level of lighting, clear pathways, information points that are clearly signed and that use tactile markers.
- Journey information should be announced, displayed clearly or available through a member of on-board staff.
- Information about your location and surroundings on arrival at your destination.
- Allowing guide dogs on any public transport.

To find out more about the level of service you can expect, order a copy of our free guide to getting great service by contacting our Helpline. Our Equality Act toolkit gives you advice on writing a complaint letter and taking further action. You can download the pack at [rnib.org.uk/equalityact](https://www.rnib.org.uk/equalityact) or you can order a copy by contacting our Helpline.



Good to know

You can get a Radar NKS key to unlock accessible toilets in bus and train stations, shopping centres, pubs, cafés, department stores and other public locations. The key costs £4.50. Call Disability Rights UK on **020 7250 8191** to order one.

There are also various smartphone apps for bus and trains which are very helpful. City Mapper is popular, but can only be used in London, Manchester and Birmingham; whereas Traveline GB can be used all over the UK. In Northern Ireland, you can use an app called Translink. These apps can be downloaded from your app store onto your phone for free. Please see **citymapper.com**, **traveline.info** or **translink.co.uk** for more information.



Buses

For many people, using local buses is the only way to get to work, visit friends and family or attend medical appointments. However, travelling by bus can be challenging, especially when services vary depending on where you live and who operates them.

We've made four short films called 'Top tips for bus travel', where we hear practical tips from blind and partially sighted people. We're also working with operators to improve bus services as well as campaigning for changes to specific aspects of bus travel. Find out more by visiting [rnib.org.uk/bus-travel](https://www.rnib.org.uk/bus-travel)

Planning your journey

If you plan your journey in advance, it will help to make your journey easier. Your local council and local bus service providers will be able to give you information to help you travel independently and safely.

How to contact your local council or bus service provider

Visit [gov.uk/find-your-local-council](https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council) for the details of your local council or call TraveLine on **0871 200 2233** to find the details of your local bus operator.

Here are a few of the things you might like to ask them:

Is there a travel centre in my area? Some local bus operators and councils run travel centres where you can drop in and find out about local services.

How will I be able to identify local buses and bus stops?

How do I pay for my journey? Do I need to pay beforehand or have the exact money? Are there any concessions I'm entitled to?

Do you provide journey or travel support cards? These are credit card sized and you can show them to the driver as you board to alert them that you need help.

What information is available about bus routes, timetables and the location of bus stops? And is any of it available in a format I can read?

Are there any services available to me, as someone with sight loss, which will help me use local bus services? This might include travel mentoring schemes where bus operators offer familiarisation sessions for people with disabilities, audio announcements at bus stops or on the buses themselves.

Bus information straight to your mobile

- **UK Bus Checker** – is a paid-for smartphone app that reads out when your next bus is due to arrive. For more information visit buschecker.com/app/UK
- **Arriva Bus** – is a free smartphone app which shows your nearest bus stop, what buses are at that stop and when they are due to arrive. You can also plan journeys and work out what time you will get to your destination. For more information visit, arrivabus.co.uk/app
- **NextBuses** – is a free smartphone app that allows you to select a bus stop close to where you are in Scotland, England or Wales to find out the next bus times. Scheduled bus times are shown if live times are not available. To find out more, visit mytraveline.mobi
- **Traveline-txt** – if you can't get the NextBuses service on your phone, you can check the next buses from a particular bus stop by sending the bus stop code in a text. The bus stop code may be displayed on the bus stop flag or in the timetable case. To use the service, simply type the stop code as a text message – and send it to **84268**. The message you send will cost your normal text message charge. In some areas the reply will be free of charge. In most areas the reply will cost up to 25p.

Booking assistance

If you want to be escorted from a pre-arranged meeting point to the bus and be met at your destination to continue your journey, you can book this free assistance through your transport operator. There are sometimes designated meeting areas at stations so make sure that you ask if there is such a place when you make your booking and find out how to get there. If there isn't a meeting point, then confirm with the operator where you will be met by a member of staff.

Getting on and off a bus

There are a few simple steps that can help when getting on and off a bus:

- If you need to hail a bus it can help if you hold up a card with the bus number on it or the word 'Bus' so the driver knows to stop for you. These can be purchased from your local society or from RNIB Product for Life stores. To find your nearest resource centre, contact our Helpline or search in your local area on the Sightline Directory.
- When you get on the bus, tell the driver where you'd like to get off and ask them to tell you when the bus reaches that stop. Sit near to the driver so that you can hear them when they tell you that you are there.
- Some buses have both audio announcements about the location of the bus, as well as buttons which can be pressed to alert the bus driver that you would like to get off the bus. These buttons are usually only located on some of the vertical grab bars, so ensure that you're sat or standing next to a bar with a button so that you can locate it easily when you need to get off the bus.

- Ask other passengers if you need assistance getting on and off the bus. Tell them how you like to be guided, ask how far the bus is from the kerb and where the handrails are.

Stop for me, Speak to me

Blind and partially sighted people can experience some fundamental barriers when trying to use buses. Usually these issues can be overcome if drivers have a better awareness of the problems blind and partially sighted people face.

We have a campaign called 'Stop for me, Speak for me' which is trying to improve awareness amongst bus drivers and bus operation staff through training. Using real-life experiences from those with sight loss, the training helps improve the service provided by bus drivers.

To find out more information on this campaign, please visit [rnib.org.uk/campaigning](https://www.rnib.org.uk/campaigning)

Guide and assistance dogs

Guide dogs are allowed on all buses and there are no restrictions on how many are allowed on at any one time. If you have your guide dog with you on a bus, try to sit in the larger priority seating area where there is more space.

Concessions

The national bus concession scheme for disabled people is run by local councils and operates differently in various parts of the UK.

In England

Many local councils issue blind and partially sighted people and people who are of retirement age, with an annual bus pass which gives you free off-peak travel on local buses. Off peak is between 9.30am and 11.00pm Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and on bank holidays. The regulations for discounted or free bus travel vary from area to area. Contact your local council for more information and to enquire about additional benefits such as including tram travel.

In London

You may be eligible for a Freedom Pass provided by your London borough council. This offers free travel on the Transport for London network at all times.

In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Each country operates independent bus pass schemes. In Wales, contact your local council for a pass you can use on buses at any time of the day. A similar scheme is run by Transport Scotland and they require a National Entitlement card. In Northern Ireland you can apply to Translink for a half-fare SmartPass that can be used on bus and rail services.



Coaches

Planning your journey

If you plan your journey in advance it'll help to make your journey easier. There are a number of accessible coaches operated by the following companies: National Express (the largest UK operator), Arriva, MegaBus, Gold Line (Northern Ireland) and Citylink (Scotland).

Booking assistance

If you need help boarding or leaving the coach, help with your luggage, or alerting to which stop you need to get off, it's best to call the coach company beforehand. Usually, it is the driver who provides assistance and they may be able to give announcements on the journey to keep you informed.

Concessions

There isn't a national concessions scheme at present, but it's good to check with your coach operator to see if they offer discounts.

For example, National Express offers a Disabled Coachcard for people who are registered as disabled, which costs £10 (plus £2 postage and packaging) and offers a third off your travel throughout the year.

Trams

The vast majority of tram services are modern, newly developed services and have high levels of accessibility. Tram services are currently in Birmingham, Blackpool, Croydon, Dublin, Edinburgh, Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield and Tyne and Wear. Audible and visible announcements, which provide information about the final destination and the next stop, are available on all trams.

Journey planning and booking assistance

You can contact the individual operators who will be able to assist you. All have online and telephone service information, including details of fares, accessibility and any assistance offered.

Concessions

Concessionary and discounted fares are available for older and disabled passengers on all services. Contact your operator or local authority for details.

Community transport

Community transport is a local door-to-door transport service which:

- is often called 'Dial-a-Ride', 'Dial-a-Journey' or 'Ring and Ride'
- can carry you if you are unable to use public transport
- you book in advance and may have to pay for, but is far cheaper than a taxi
- generally cannot be used for journeys for which there is alternative transport
- cannot be used for trips you have to do every day, such as getting to work
- is usually run by your local council, transport authority or a local society. Some run regular shopping trips and local shop mobility schemes.

To find your local community transport service, search online at **ctonline.org.uk**, call your local council or authority, or visit the Sightline Directory to search for a local society. In London, where Dial-a-Ride is free, there is a guide to Dial-a-Ride available to download from the TfL website **tfl.gov.uk**. Temporary membership is available if you're visiting London.

Trains

Planning your journey

National Rail Enquiries can provide you with information about your train journey over the phone and on the internet. Call **0345 748 4950** or visit **nationalrail.co.uk**. Please note that this is an automated service.

National Rail also has a free app where you can plan your journey, get live status updates, alerts and notifications.

The Describe Online website provides text guides for stations and transport hubs for National Rail and Transport for London.

Visit **describe-online.com**

Trainline is a free app for your smartphone which can help you search for train times across the UK, plan your journeys, purchase tickets and check for any live delays to your journey.

Visit **thetrainline.com**

The City Mapper app can be used in London, Manchester and Birmingham, but Traveline GB is available to use all over the UK. Both of these apps are free. Please see **citymapper.com** or traveline.info for more information.

The Translink NI Railways website can plan your train journeys and provide information on railway services in Northern Ireland.

Visit **[translink.co.uk/services/NI-Railways](https://www.translink.co.uk/services/NI-Railways)**

If you're concerned about making a journey for the first time, it might be useful for you to take part in a 'Try a Train Day' event or find out if there is a travel mentoring scheme in your area.

'Try a Train Day' events are run by train operators and usually involve being escorted on a journey so that you can familiarise yourself with the stations, trains and locations of facilities. First Capital Connect, C2C and South West Trains are just some of the train operators who have already run these events. To find out about 'Try a Train Day' events in your area, contact your local train operator through National Rail Enquiries on **0345 748 4950** or visit **[nationalrail.co.uk](https://www.nationalrail.co.uk)**

Booking assistance

Booking assistance for your journey can make travelling safer. You can book free assistance for boarding, alighting and changing trains through your train operator but this usually needs to be done 24 hours in advance of your journey. To find your train operator, contact National Rail enquiries on **0345 748 4950** or visit **[nationalrail.co.uk](https://www.nationalrail.co.uk)**. If you haven't been able to book your assistance in advance, you can still ask for assistance at ticket offices or turnstiles.

If you need assistance when travelling in Northern Ireland, you can call the Translink Contact Centre on **0289 066 6630** at least 24 hours before you travel.

Accessibility at train stations

You should also talk to your train operator or the staff at your local station about the availability of timetable information that is suitable for you. Some train stations also have maps in braille and audio to assist you. Many trains have on board visual or audio notifications of the next station stop. If these aren't available or if you are not able to use them, then you could talk to station staff about the number of stops you need to travel so you can calculate when to get off the train.

Most train platforms will have visual and tactile markings indicating where it is safe to stand, such as a yellow line or bumps in the paving that tell you the safe areas of the platform.

Concessions

Concessionary fares are available for blind and partially sighted people and these often deliver discounts of up to 50 per cent on the standard ticket price. You'll need to provide evidence of your sight loss in order to get these discounts. This could include a document from your local social services department.

To find out how to contact your local social services, call our Helpline or visit the Sightline Directory.

The Disabled Persons Railcard also offers a range of discounts on advance, off-peak and anytime train fares. It also offers discounts on other services, such as a third off some London Underground Travelcards. The card costs £20 for one year or £54 for three years. You're not required to travel with a companion but if you do and if they are an adult, they can also receive the same discounts. For more information, call **0345 605 0525** (7am to 10pm Monday to Sunday) or visit **disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk**

Taxis and mini cabs

Planning your journey and booking assistance

If you're looking for a taxi at the start or end of your journey, the Traintaxi website **traintaxi.co.uk** can give you the phone

numbers of the local taxi operators from any station in the country so you can check on accessibility before travelling.

Under the terms of the Equality Act 2010, licensed taxis, black cabs and private hire drivers cannot refuse to take a guide dog, although a driver can apply for an exemption if, for example, they are allergic to dogs.

To help you stop a black taxi in the street, we produce a card with the word 'Taxi' in bold letters. These can be purchased from your local society or from our RNIB and Action for Blind People resource centres. To find your nearest resource centre, contact our Helpline or visit the Sightline Directory.

When ordering a taxi or minicab, you may want to tell them that you have sight loss and whether you have a guide dog. It may be a good idea to check the cost of the journey in advance if

you haven't done it before. Let them know that you may need the driver to knock on the door or press an intercom button when they arrive. Some companies use SMS texting as a means of communicating with passengers to tell them that the driver is outside, so let them know if you can access text messages or not.

Let them know if you need guiding to the vehicle from your door. You may want to ask the driver to tell you exactly where they have parked and describe the surroundings. If you need assistance at your destination getting to a front door or to a familiar point, ask the driver to assist you.



Smartphone taxi apps

There are many accessible smartphone taxi apps that can be used to order a taxi directly from your phone. You can either use your location services on your phone or you can type in the location you wish to be picked up from.

Uber can be used in various locations such as Manchester, Newcastle, London, Leeds, Sheffield, Portsmouth, Birmingham, Bristol and Dublin. On the app you can order a taxi directly to your location or get a fare estimate if you want to check the price of your journey in advance. The app will also show you the contact details and car information of your driver, including a map of how far away they are. You can also share your journey with a friend or family member through the app, which sends a text message directly to them, so that they can ensure you have arrived safely at your destination. For more information, see **go.uber.com**

Hailo is another taxi app that can currently be used in London, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and Ireland. With Hailo, you can pre-book journeys up to four weeks in advance. If you are booking a journey, the app will use your current location and you can include any building numbers or names. If you have any special requirements, you can order

the taxi as normal through the app and then call the driver to let them know. For more information, see **hailoapp.com**

If you live in London, Addison Lee provides a taxi service from various locations, including airport transfers. You can pre-book a taxi through the app and they even have a snooze option, if you want to delay the arrival of your taxi for any reason. For more information, visit **addisonlee.com**

Concessions

London Taxicard scheme

The London Taxicard scheme provides subsidised door-to-door transport for people who may find it difficult to use public transport, including blind and partially sighted people. Taxicard holders are able to make journeys in licensed London taxis and private hire vehicles and have the cost of their trips subsidised. The cost of travel will vary depending on the amount of subsidy available in your borough. To find out more about the Taxicard in your borough or to apply for a Taxicard, contact **020 7934 9791** or email **taxicard@londoncouncils.gov.uk**. Once you have successfully applied for your Taxicard, you can book your taxis by calling ComCab on **020 7763 5001**.

Access to work

Access to Work (AtW) is a discretionary grant scheme run by Jobcentre Plus that helps towards any extra employment costs that result from a disability, including travelling to work.

If you have a disability and are in a job, about to start in a job, about to start a Work Trial or are self-employed (and registered with HMRC), AtW could benefit you. It applies to any paid job, part-time or full-time, permanent or temporary. There is no minimum number of hours for eligibility for support under the scheme.



AtW can help you with travel to work when there is no practical public transport alternative, and for travel within work.

If your disability or health condition affects the type of work you do, and it is likely to last for 12 months or longer, get in touch with AtW by calling 0345 268 8489 to check your eligibility for the scheme or to make a claim. Your disability or health condition may not have a big effect on what you do each day, but may have a long-term effect on how well you can do your job. An AtW adviser will normally phone you at your place of work or on the number you have provided. They will then need to know more about your travel needs.

“I got help to apply for Access toWork, the government scheme to support people with disability at work. Without Access to Work, I wouldn't have a support worker for travel or equipment such as a scanner and special computer software.”

Maxine Turkington

Travelling by car

Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge Scheme entitles disabled people, including passengers registered as blind or partially sighted, to car parking which is closer to their destination. If you travel by car with family, friends or carers, they can use your Blue Badge whilst travelling with you. To find out more, contact the Blue Badge Helpline on **0844 463 0213** (**0844 463 0214** if you live in Scotland or **0844 463 0215** if you live in Wales) or email **bluebadge@northgate-is.com**. If you live in Northern Ireland, you can contact the Blue Badge Unit on **0300 200 7818** or email **bluebadges@drdni.gov.uk**

Road tax

If you receive the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance, War Pensioners Mobility Supplement, or Personal Independence Payment, you are entitled to an exemption from road tax.

Driving

If you have an eye condition that affects both eyes and cannot be corrected by glasses or contact lenses, leading to a significant loss to your field of vision, you must tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) by calling **0300 790 6806**. The DVLA will want to be sure you can meet the basic eyesight requirements for driving. If you do not inform the DVLA, you will be breaking the law and invalidating your insurance, as well as endangering yourself and others.

More detailed information on driving and sight loss is available from our website or by contacting our Helpline. Please note that the regulations are different for bus and lorry drivers.

London transport

Planning your journey

The key to accessible tube travel is to plan ahead and Transport for London (TfL) can help you plan your journey. They produce a good range of free maps in various formats, including an 'Avoiding stairs' map and a 'Step free' guide. The tube maps are also available in large print, audio and in black and white. For more information, call **0343 222 1234** or email **tflaccessibility@tfl.gov.uk**

TfL has a journey planner at **tfl.gov.uk** which has been designed so that people using screen reader software can use it easily. There are also live train departure boards which can be checked on the internet or from your mobile phone.

For alternative versions of the tube map in white on black or yellow on blue, download the free Colourblind tube map app which allows you to view tube maps in six alternative versions on your smartphone.

Buying tickets

Although you can still buy paper tickets for the underground, it is cheaper to use an Oyster or a contactless bank card. Single tickets, Day Travelcards, One Day Bus and Tram Passes are all more expensive than using pay as you go on your Oyster or a contactless card.

An Oyster card costs £5 from any Oyster ticket shop, station or Travel Information Centre. You can add money on the card for pay as you go journeys, and add on travelcards for the train or bus.

If you don't already have a contactless bank card, you can get one from your bank. They can only be used for pay as you go journeys – you cannot add travelcards or bus passes onto the card.

If you have an iPhone 6 or above, or an Apple Watch, you can also use it to pay for your journey through Apple Pay. This works in the same way as a contactless bank card payment, since you have to link the device with your bank account. Contact your bank for information about using Apple Pay.

When travelling on buses in London, you can only use Oyster, contactless payments or paper tickets for your journey.

Booking assistance

Unlike for the train, you don't need to book assistance in advance from TfL for the tube. There is a 24-hour travel information centre on **0343 222 1234** (or textphone **0800 112 3456**).

All Underground staff have had disability equality training and will be able and happy to assist you. You can ask for help with tickets, travel information and boarding the train. A member of staff will help you onto the train and if necessary, help you find a seat. They will then call ahead to your destination or interchange stations and arrange for a member of staff to meet and assist you there.

TfL also run a Travel Mentoring Service, offering advice on planning a journey in London using an accessible route and can even provide a mentor to come with you for your first few journeys. Mentoring is free of charge and is available Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm. You can find out more by calling **020 3054 4361** or emailing **travelmentor@tfl.gov.uk**

Guide dogs

Trained guide dogs are allowed on London Underground escalators. Staff will help you avoid escalators where possible, or stop them to allow you and your dog to walk.

Accessibility at tube stations

It is always useful to know how many stops you'll need to travel before you reach your destination. All London Underground trains have audible announcements on the train. Audible announcements are also made at some stations so that you know which train is about to arrive at the platform.

All trains have priority seating which is clearly marked next to the doors. These are for disabled people, pregnant women, older people and those travelling with children.

Many 'accessible' stations have a step onto the train which may be as high as 30cm (12 inches). You can contact Transport for All on **020 7737 2339** for detailed information about the size of the gaps between the platform and the train or for the number of steps at a station.

If a lift is broken when you arrive at a step-free station, ask a member of staff to help you re-plan your journey. If there is a single accessible bus journey to the next step-free station, or your destination, then this is the route you will be advised to take. However if there is not, then London Underground is obliged to order you a taxi at their expense. This also applies when the line is closed and the rail replacement bus service

is not accessible or does not stop at an alternative accessible station.

TfL's journey planner or their Customer Service Centre can tell you if particular lifts or escalators are out of order or if stations are closed. Or you can get this information texted to your phone via TfL Travel Alerts. Register for the service at **alerts.tfl.gov.uk**

Many Underground stations have help points on the platforms. They also have buttons to press for passenger information.

Most suburban tube, Overground and rail stations have car parks. All have accessible spaces, free for use by Blue Badge holders.

Concessions

If you have sight loss and live in London, you may be entitled to a Freedom Pass which gives you free travel on London Underground. Contact your local council and ask for an application form. The Freedom Pass telephone support line is **0300 330 1433** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or you can email **info@freedompass.org**

A Freedom Pass entitles you to 24-hour free travel across TfL's networks, except for some river boats where you pay half the usual price. The Freedom Pass is accepted at all times

on London Overground services run by TfL. However, other parts of the rail network only accept Freedom Pass travel after 9.30am. Make sure you check before you begin your journey.



Travelling abroad

Air

If you're planning a flight or a foreign holiday, you need to know that the whole journey is accessible before you set out. A problem on one stage of the journey, such as not being able to find help on arrival at the airport, or not knowing where to go because you cannot read the information screens, could ruin the whole experience or even stop you from travelling altogether. Very often access needs are not obvious to other people, so make sure you explain your particular requirements clearly.

Booking assistance

Airports are often large and confusing places. If you feel that you may not be able to find your own way to the plane, ask for the airline to 'meet and assist' you. This assistance can be booked in advance (at least 48 hours before you travel) to help you find your way around the airport – from check-in to the departure lounge and onwards to the arrival terminal.

Accessibility at airports

As a disabled person, you can travel with up to two items of mobility equipment free of charge. They won't count as part of your baggage allowance. You should tell your airline, travel agent or tour operator as soon as possible if you're bringing a mobility aid with you.

Travelling with a companion

You must travel with a companion if you're not self-reliant, for example if you need help with feeding, breathing, using medication or using the toilet. The airline you're flying with will do their best to make sure you sit next to each other, so long as you give them 48 hours' notice.

Travelling with a guide dog

Guide dogs are allowed to travel in the aircraft cabin with their owner on approved routes and carriers registered to carry guide dogs. For more information contact Guide Dogs on **0118 983 5555**.

Airport parking

Blue Badge holders may be entitled to a discount on long stay parking. Check with the relevant airport for the rates.

Ferry

While ferry operators can assist you with your orientation of the ship, they also recommend that you travel with a fully sighted companion if you are likely to require further assistance during the journey.

If you're travelling with a registered guide dog, it's essential that you notify the ferry operator at the time of booking.

Blue Badge holders can use designated parking bays for disabled people on the ferry that are close to lifts.

Further information

RNIB Helpline

Our Helpline is your direct line to the information, support, advice and products you need. We also have dedicated Advice and Legal Rights teams who can give you guidance on many aspects of customer service, including information about travel and how to challenge discrimination.

Call **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**. For the latest information on travelling with sight loss, visit our website **rnib.org.uk/travel**

Sightline Directory

The online directory to help you find the people, organisations and services you need, including travel assistance schemes.

Visit **sightlinedirectory.org.uk**

Mobility products

We supply a range of products to help people with sight loss get around more easily. To find out where you can buy products in your area or to order the latest copy of our Mobility Solutions catalogue, call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999**.

Your guide to getting great service

Receiving great customer service can make travel easier and safer. If you want to make sure you're receiving the right level of customer service for you, or if you'd like to find out how to challenge poor customer service you've experienced whilst travelling or when booking assistance or travel online, order our free guide. Call **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

Transport Scotland

To find out what help and support is available in Scotland, email **info@transport.gov.scot** or call **0141 272 7100**. Visit **transport.gov.scot**

Translink

To find the latest information about public transport services in Northern Ireland, visit **translink.co.uk**

Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

For driver licensing enquiries, call **0300 790 6801** or visit **www.dvla.gov.uk**

Guide Dogs

For all information relating to travelling with your guide dog, call **0118 983 5555**, email **guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk** or visit **guidedogs.org.uk**

National Express

To book travel assistance or for advice, call **0371 781 8181** (local rate number, open seven days a week, 8am to 10pm), email **DPTH@nationalexpress.com** or visit **nationalexpress.com**

Describe online

Provides text descriptions of a number of public transport venues. Visit **describe-online.com**

RNIB Booklet Series

About the Starting Out Series

The Starting Out series aims to give people who are losing or have recently lost their sight essential information about living with sight loss. Titles include:

- Benefits, Concessions and Registration
- Emotional Support
- Employment
- Help from Social Services
- Making the Most of Your Sight

About the Confident Living Series

The Confident Living series is for people who are losing or have recently lost their sight and are trying to build their confidence to continue to lead full and independent lives. Titles include:

- Leisure
- Reading
- Shopping
- Travel
- Technology

About the Understanding Series

The Understanding series is designed to help you, your friends and family understand a little bit more about your eye condition. Titles include:

- Age Related Macular Degeneration
- Cataracts
- Charles Bonnet Syndrome
- Dry Eye
- Eye Conditions Related to Diabetes
- Glaucoma
- Nystagmus
- Retinal Detachment
- Retinal Pigmentosa
- Posterior Vitreous Detachment

All these leaflets are available in audio, print and braille formats. To order please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** (all calls charged at local rate), email **helpline@rnib.org.uk** or visit **shop.rnib.org.uk**

For a full list of the information sources used in any of these titles or to provide feedback on the Starting Out and Confident Living Series, please email **ckit@rnib.org.uk**

To provide feedback on the Understanding Series, please email **eyehealth@rnib.org.uk**.

RNIB Helpline



Call: 0303 123 9999



Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk



**Or say, "Alexa, call RNIB Helpline"
to an Alexa enabled device.**

**Visits the Sight Advice FAQ:
sightadvicefaq.org.uk**

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