

# Street Clutter and Built Environment Empowerment Toolkit

This document provides advice on how to raise concerns or challenge decisions relating to street clutter or features within the built environment, to enable people with sight loss to use it safely and confidently.

## Street Clutter

For blind and partially sighted people, clear pavements are vital for independent mobility. When we talk about street clutter, this can include:

- Pavement parked cars
- Car parked across H bars or dropped kerbs
- Overhanging branches
- Wheelie bins
- Advertising boards
- Poorly parked e-scooters/dockless bikes
- Café furniture or shop displays

This list is not exhaustive.

If you encounter obstacles such as those above, you may want to:

- If the obstruction is the responsibility of a café or a shop, for example, you could have a conversation with the business to explain the difficulty you are having getting around the obstacle, as a person with sight loss. The aim is to increase understanding, ensuring that any obstacle will be removed or placed not to cause further obstruction. Tip - remain calm and reasonable.
- If the obstruction comes under the responsibility of the local council, such as wheelie bins or overhanging branches, contact the council and/or your local councillors. You could collect evidence such as



photographs, videos, the time and date of your experience navigating the street clutter to share with them and help explain the issue.

- Pavement parked cars are an ongoing frustration for many pedestrians with a visual impairment. You can report incidents to your local council and the police by calling 101 for non-emergency matters.
- You can find your local council by following this link [Find your local council](#). You can find your local councillor and MP details by following this link [Write To Them](#)

## Pavement parking

England and Wales - Local authorities in England and Wales have some limited powers to tackle pavement parking. You can report parked vehicles causing an obstruction on pavements by calling the police on 101 for non-emergency matters.

Northern Ireland - In Northern Ireland penalty notices can only be issued to cars on pavements where the road has parking restrictions, and this is the responsibility of the Department of Infrastructure. Where there are no road markings and the vehicle is causing an obstruction, it is the responsibility of the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) to respond and issue a fixed penalty notice, if appropriate. You can report non-emergency matters by calling the police on 101.

Scotland - The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 (Section 50) prohibits pavement parking and gives local authorities the powers to issue penalty notices where appropriate. These penalties are being introduced at different times by each council in Scotland. You can find out more information by contacting your local council.

To find out more about how Guide Dogs is campaigning on these issues and for further resources and materials follow this link to our [Streets Ahead Campaign](#)





## Built Environment

If you're experiencing challenges with getting out and about due to features designed or introduced into the external environment e.g. shared surface areas, broken crossings, broken or incorrect or lack of tactile paving, pedestrian/cycle lanes or roadworks and other aspects of the environment, you may want to:

- Speak with your local Highways or Planning Team to share your experience. You can find your local council contact details by following this link [Find your local council](#). You can find your local councillor and MP details by following this link [Write To Them](#).
- Collect evidence e.g. photographs or videos. This evidence can be shared with the relevant responsible body.
- Get support from local groups: The built environment issue you have concerns about may also impact others in your community. You could contact local organisations representing vision impaired and other disabled people in your local area to share your concern. The RNIB Sightline Directory is a good resource to find local sight loss organisations in your area. Follow this link to the Sightline Directory [Sightline Directory](#)

**Tip** - if a recent change to the built environment has taken place, it may be useful to ask whether an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has taken place and what measures have been implemented, to support access for vulnerable pedestrians and road users. To find out more about Equality Impact Assessments, follow this link to [The Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessments](#)

## Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland:

The government or assembly in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have the powers to make decisions on built environment issues. You can find more information by visiting their respective websites:

- Follow this link to the Welsh Government website [Gov Wales](#)
- Follow this link to the Scottish Government website [Gov Scot](#)





- Follow this link to the Northern Ireland Executive website [Northern Ireland Gov UK](#)

If you live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, you can contact your regional representatives:

- Wales - AMs (Assembly Member). Follow this link to find your [Assembly Member](#)
- Scotland - MSPs (Member of Scottish Parliament). Follow this link to find your [MSP](#)
- Northern Ireland - MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly). Follow this link to find your [MLA](#)

## Who's who?

- Councillors will sit on various committees that have responsibility for specific areas of local policy. County, district, town, and unitary councils have responsibility for different aspects of local policy. Check on your council's website to find out the areas for which they are responsible.
- Elected Mayors have a great deal of influence locally across a wide range of areas. Search your local council's website to determine if you have an elected Mayor in your area.
- Police are there to help implement laws. Call the 101 non-emergency number. They can advise on such issues as pavement parking.
- Your MP is there to be your voice in Parliament. Speak to your MP if there is an issue that only the Government can change or something you wish to raise with a Minister or the Prime Minister. This may include transport, benefits, health, or equality law.

MPs can help solve local issues and can only support people who live within their constituency. Let us know if you contact your MP, as our Public Affairs Team can offer helpful advice and information. Follow this link to [find your MP](#).





## Open Doors Campaign

Guide Dogs 'Open Doors' campaign aims to end access refusals faced by people with guide dogs. We want to educate businesses and empower guide dog owners to put an end to this form of discrimination. You can find out more on the Guide Dogs website by following the link to: [Guide Dogs current campaigns Open Doors](#)

## Further information

Guide Dogs has resources that may be of use when educating members of the public and/or Councillors and businesses relating to many of the above challenges. Visit the following link [Guidance on Accessible Regeneration Schemes](#). This resource provides information and messaging on many elements of the built environment and is useful when engaging with councils and politicians.

If you require any further information, please email [Information@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:Information@guidedogs.org.uk) or call 0800 781 1444.

## Guide Dogs App

Guide Dogs has also developed an app to make reporting access issues experienced by blind and partially sighted people quick and easy. This includes matters covered in this toolkit, as well as access refusals experienced by guide dog owners when accessing services with their guide dog. The app is a quick and easy way to report issues and seek information and support. You can download the free app for both IOS and Android devices at app stores.

The information given in this document was correct as of June 2025. This document provides basic information and is not a substitute for legal advice.

## End of Document

