visits4u Access Guide

Factsheet: Wayfinding and Signage

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Wayfinding is an approach to studying people's movements and their relationship to space. It opens up new ways to design for people's spatial behaviour.

*Wayfinding is a multi-disciplinary task- i*n any new environment, we all search for direction and orientation, i.e. we are searching for wayfinding clues. Some people are good at this, many are not.

An effective wayfinding scheme helps people understand their environment, plan their route, choose their destination and navigate to it - simply and without confusion. The experience of a "journey" may be influenced by:

- Orientation skills
- Ability to see, hear, smell, feel
- Mobility
- Encumbrance
- Language barriers
- Ability to communicate (which may be impaired by speech impediment, hearing loss)

An inclusive Wayfinding system is likely to make use of some of the following:

- A logically planned space
- Key/memorable features
- Lighting
- Verbal/Audible directions
- Location of signs
- Visual, audible or tactile content of signs
- Colour

External Environments

Wayfinding around large sites should be assisted by appropriate directional and location signage. In addition to signs, use should be made of the topography of the site, including level changes, memorable features, and planting to aid the use of olfaction to navigate the environment. As far as practicable, external and internal spaces should be designed to be straightforward, logical and easy to understand and navigate. The use of contrasting and tactile surfaces is encouraged.

Lighting

It is recognised that people with sight conditions may take some time to adjust to a significant change in light levels. External lighting should therefore address the need for illuminating transitional space without increasing discomfort glare. Typically 100 lux is recommended for general circulation areas inside a building, but a lower level may be appropriate for external walkways – the key is to avoid significant changes in level.

Safety

There must be no doors or windows projecting onto the line of pedestrian traffic on external walkways when in the open position. Recessing such features, or providing guard rails, seating, planting etc., will make almost any environment relatively safe. Equally, the selection of trees and foliage should be such that there is minimal risk of overhang on walkways at eye level and street furniture should be recessed or at least kept in line.

Highlighting key features

The principal entrances should be well defined from the face of the building – incorporating a canopy is helpful in identifying an entrance, as well as contrasting doors and good signs for pedestrians and drivers.

Principles of Inclusive Signage

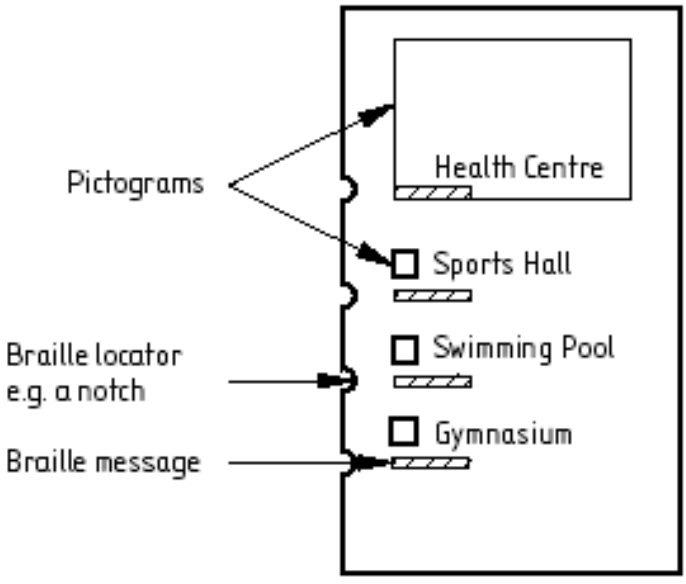
- Directional signage should be provided from all key decision points.
- Clear, non reflective signage is a necessity
- Signs should be simple to understand, easily read and understood and preferably contain both symbols or pictograms and clear English text
- Use universally approved symbols to accord with BS 8501:2002 or equivalent national standard in the country of origin unless otherwise agreed.
- Use sans serif typefaces (e.g. Helvetica Medium or Arial).
- Avoid BLOCK CAPITALS as they are difficult to read from a distance as they have no word shape, unlike lower case letters with initial upper letter. People with low vision or dyslexia may find block capitals particularly difficult.
- Direction or information signs should be at consistent heights and logically positioned at key decision points
- Consider the distance from which the sign is to be read – 15mm height for close level, up to 90mm for external direction signs and 200mm for long distance on external fascia signs.
- Comfortable viewing heights are 1200-1700mm ffl standing and 750-1350mm seated
- Access for close viewing of signs is recommended, toilet signs in particular benefit from tactile properties
- Embossed (not engraved) lettering is particularly useful at lower levels (minimum 15mm height of initial capital letter and 1mm depth)
- With the exception of toilet doors, door signs should be mounted on the wall next to the leading edge and between 1400mm and 1700mm AFL, particularly where the door is generally left open (otherwise located centrally on the door itself).

Use of Arrows

- Arrows should follow the shape of ISO 7001 and positioning should follow the principles set out in the Sign Design Guide, an example of which is below:

- Arrows need to be positioned carefully, preferably grouped for direction:

Where Braille is added to signs, the minimum projection from face should be 0.46mm and its position should be indicated with a notch or locator on the left hand side of the sign:



Use of Colour

Consider other wayfinding aids – e.g. colour coding to floors to distinguish walkways, tactile floor finishes to indicate a change in level or activity, tactile maps and models.

Signs with white lettering on a dark background is often easier to read – at least 70 points minimum contrast in LRV is recommended, see table below

Recommendations for achieving satisfactory contrast:

Background/Environment	Signboard Background Colour	Text or Symbol Colour		
Red brick or dark stone	White	**Black**	**Blue**	**Green**
Light brickwork or stone	Black or other dark colour	**White**		**Yellow**
Whitewashed wall	Black or other dark colour	**White**		**Yellow**
Green (vegetation etc.)	White			

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