

MOBILITY INFORMATION

CANES

You do not have to be severely sight impaired (blind) to benefit from the use of a cane. There are different types of canes available that can help you become a more safe, confident and independent traveller. Here are some of the canes that are commonly available:

Symbol canes

A symbol cane is not long enough to reach the ground, because its function is to inform members of the public that the person carrying it has a visual impairment. It is light to carry and can be folded up so it can be carried in a bag and used as and when it is needed.

Guide canes

These are sturdier and longer than a symbol cane and are used to locate kerbs and steps. Guide canes can be fitted with a tip that is straight (pencil tip) or one that rolls along the ground. Learning to use the guide cane requires minimal training in order for you to start moving independently.

Long cane

When used in a scanning technique, one-or-two-point-touch (tapping technique) the long cane can help you to find obstacles in your pathway. Like the guide cane, you will also be able to find kerbs and steps. Depending on your vision, you may only need to use the long cane on a part time basis (for example, if your vision reduces when conditions are dim). In order to use the long cane effectively, you will be required to undergo a long cane training programme.

Hoople

The Hoople is a pear-shaped device which achieves a similar function to a white cane, but is designed for use in conditions where using a long cane can be difficult, such as over rough terrain or in a rural environment. It can also be used by young children as a pre-cane aid or by people with limited hand movements. The Hoople is moved along the ground as opposed to being moved from side to side like a long cane.

Does the cane need to be white?

Traditionally canes are white because they are easily recognisable by members of the public. But there are more colours that are now becoming available for long canes.

At what age should a child start long cane training?

It depends on the needs, maturity and abilities of the child. That being said, some mobility specialists introduce a cane to a visually impaired child as soon as they can walk.

If you want to find out more about canes and cane training, contact the Mobility Officer at the Joseph Clarke Educational Service.