Tactile paving and why we need it!

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Sight loss

• There are approximately 1 million blind and partially sighted adults in the UK. Approximately a further million live with significant sight loss.

• Approximately 5% have no sight at all.

• Sight loss can include
  – Limited field of vision
  – Loss of central vision
  – Acute short sightedness
  – Uncontrollable eye movements
  – Night blindness
Demographics

- Approximately 90% of blind and partially sighted people are over 60.
- 33 per cent of those over 80 years report a visual impairment compared with 12 per cent of 50 to 54s.
- At least one in three people with a learning disability has serious sight loss.
- Some BME groups at particular risk eg diabetes, glaucoma.
Mobility issues

- Mobility and getting round independently is one of the biggest problems for blind and partially sighted people.
- 2007 survey - 48% indicated difficulty in going out by themselves.
- 80% said they encounter difficulty while attempting to cross roads
- 43% reported that they never or rarely crossed roads independently without a designated crossing.
Mobility aids

• Most common mobility aid (apart from being guided by a sighted person) is a long cane
• About 5000 blind and partially sighted people in the UK are guide dogs owners
• Many blind and partially sighted people use no mobility aids at all apart from their residual vision.
Why do we need tactile paving?

- Tactile paving is a key way of promoting independence and safety for blind and partially sighted people.
- Blind and partially sighted people often rely on getting about on foot - they cannot drive.
- Without tactile paving it is difficult or impossible to know where the pavement stops where there is a dropped kerb, or where there are hazards such as steps.
- Tactile paving is also used as a way for a person to line themselves up to cross the road.
What is tactile paving?

2 main standard types usually used.

1. **Blister paving** - "bumpy" paving usually at crossings
   - Allows blind and partially sighted people to identify the edge of the pavement where there is a dropped kerb

2. **Corduroy paving** - long unbroken lines usually at tops of steps and platform edges
   - Conveys message 'hazard, proceed with caution'
Colour is important

- Blister paving - guidelines state should be red at controlled crossings (with traffic lights to stop traffic) or buff at uncontrolled crossings.
- 96% of blind and partially sighted people have some useful vision. Colour contrast is very helpful in identifying the location and type of crossing.
- Grey is very difficult to differentiate from surrounding pavement.
Size and shape matters

• Should be a minimum of 800mm deep
• Edge should line up with pedestrian's line of travel for crossing road to help with orientation
• Should have "tail" extending to building line
• Should line up with traffic lights and push button box
• Should direct person straight across the road
• Should line up with each other at either side of the road
Problems with tactile

- Sometimes poorly installed or poorly maintained
- Painful on feet
- Difficult for people using wheelchairs or other mobility aids
- Can be slippery if icy, wet leaves etc
- Confusing if different standards used
• If tactile paving is properly installed and maintained, with high quality materials there are fewer problems

• Raised bumps are a compromise - need to be detectable to people eg with lesser sensation in feet

• Important that DfT guidance is used - schemes which differ from place to place confuse people

• Some local authorities changing local policy - perhaps due to design or cost. Will cause real danger for blind people