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# COVID-19 | GUIDE #1

**Caring for someone over 70? You need to read this!**

## **About the guides**

This Hi-Vis UK information and guidance series is designed to help those supporting or caring for an older person with Dual Sensory Impairment (DSI) during this COVID-19 emergency and the guidance on social distancing and socially isolating. The guides are for the DSI person's family, friends, neighbours, carers and care organisations, social care and health care providers.

The individual guides aim to help you quickly understand the impacts of DSI and the extra challenges brought about by the COVID-19 emergency of keeping them and you safe and still having effective communication.

Our guides cover a range of everyday situations and related challenges facing a DSI person and those who need to see them during the COVID-19 outbreak. In this guide we look at what happens when you arrive at their front door and some domestic situations. How do you both stay safe and communicate well?



# COVID-19 and Dual Sensory Impairment (DSI)

## Guides No. 1



Age related dual sensory impairment, a largely hidden condition, affects an older person's ability to: move safely around the home; access all sorts of information, including the latest Government or local authority COVID-19 updates and advice; they will struggle to maintain two-way communication such as asking for help or to arrange services.

One of the main reasons DSI is largely hidden is because older people living in their own homes, who enjoy the support of family, friends or carers, this support disguises many of its impacts.

COVID-19 and the requirement for over 70s to self-isolate, means these normal safety nets, and others, have been taken away. They will quickly realise the impacts of their DSI on their daily lives. Many people over 70 will have either sight loss, hearing loss, or both (DSI). This means they may struggle to communicate verbally. They often struggle using the telephone, reading, watching TV, listening to a radio or using the internet.

This means that the information that they receive about the COVID-19 could be very limited.

## Visiting someone with DSI at their home

Callers may have difficulty contacting them: by phone, through a window or from 2 metres away.

When you arrive at their address, you may find that they can't hear the doorbell or knocking on the door. Try to attract their attention by knocking on the window nearest to them and moving around to try and catch their attention.

When you speak to them, if you know that they use hearing aids, check that they are wearing them – and if not, use gestures to get them to put them on. Next, ensure that you are facing them with your mouth clearly visible. Speak loudly and clearly but do not shout.

If they still do not seem to understand after two or three attempts, try to rephrase or shorten your message and try that two or three times

If that is not successful, then try writing your message in large black felt tip pen on white paper. An A4 whiteboard can be very useful. If you wear PPE – a mask – your lip patterns will be hidden so writing things in large letters might be the only way to get your message across.

Remember, they may not be able to see you clearly so, if possible, wear brightly coloured clothing.

**How do I know they understand me?** They will be able to use their voice to answer your question.





## **Learn more online – it's free**

Thanks to the support of the National Lottery Community Fund we are able to provide free, practical online learning to help you get the COVID-19 message across and support someone with DSI.

**Visit: [www.hi-visuklearning.org](http://www.hi-visuklearning.org)**

For further help or advice please email [Jane@hi-vis.org](mailto:Jane@hi-vis.org)



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