



Re: The hazards of street furniture.

To whom it may concern,

We are writing to you as a group of blind and vision impaired individuals living in Cork. We currently represent 2,118 individuals living in Cork city and a further 4,200 in Cork County. Whether assisted by a long cane, a guide dog, or no mobility aid, we want these individuals to foster independence.

We would like to highlight the concept of wayfinding. NCBI has recently defined this term as “all of the ways in which people orientate themselves in physical space and navigate from place to place.” understanding here is aided by example. For instance, buildings, street art and street furniture are landmarks which inform people where they are on a desired route. We wish to focus on street furniture. While this can be used as an orientation tool it may also pose a hazard and hinder mobility.

You may have heard of NCBI’s ‘Clear Our Paths’ campaign. This annual campaign was launched in August 2022. The object was to raise awareness of temporary obstacles which serve to block or impede navigation. The campaign was immensely successful in raising awareness, but action now needs to be taken. We are therefore asking you as a business owner to be mindful of where you place your outdoor furniture so that it does not pose a hazard. If the placement is near or covering a dropped curb, it can force someone to have to try to move the obstacle which is not always possible and a person can be forced to reroute their journey. The placement will have implications for not only the blind and vision impaired but also for wheelchair users, prams, buggies, and other mobility impairments.

Additionally, the lack of contrast can pose a real challenge for someone who is vision impaired. For example, the lack of contrasting strips on glass fronts or steps can lead to someone with low vision walking into a glass pane or missing a step.

Please consider what action could be taken. If required, NCBI can assist in this consideration and advise on appropriate measures. Your actions will also act as a positive example for other business owners.

We look forward to the positive changes we can make.

Yours sincerely,

The Local Advocacy Network