Industry Checklist
Colours for the homes of people with ageing eyes or vision impairment

PEER REVIEWED

This Checklist should be read alongside the HMinfo *Industry Factsheet: Colours for the Homes of People with Ageing Eyes or Vision Impairment* and *Evidence Based Practice Review: Use of Colour for Safe Movement 2nd ed*. Both documents are available at www.homemods.info.

Background

Over time, some parts of the eyes (the lens and cornea, for example) can become denser or deteriorate, leading to blurry or partially blocked vision. Accident, trauma, tumour, stroke and/or genetics factors can also cause damage to some parts of the eyes resulting in impaired sight.

Vision impairment, through ageing or damage, commonly leads to decreased ability to recognise details. This ability to recognise detail is important for detecting obstacles or hazards to prevent falls or injuries, and for noticing specific features of a place as reference points. Decreasing ability to recognise details therefore can increase the risk of injury or for getting lost, and the reliance on others for support.

Various vision impairments or declining vision demand different colour-related solutions to make a home safer and more navigable. 'Safety' here embraces identification of hazardous features and obstacles. 'Navigability' entails recognising positions, shapes and functions of surrounding elements to provide more distinct information about the environment when moving from one place or position to another. Home modification, which deals with the elimination or minimisation of barriers in an existing home environment, is closely connected not only to safety and navigability, but also to comfort, psychological and social aspects. Appropriate colour and contrast combined with lighting, support safer and more independent movement of older people and individuals with vision impairment.

Identifying what is needed or could help

This checklist will help you identify what a person's vision impairment is and how it might be helped through using colour.

Assess the occupant's degree of vision impairment and any accessibility requirements they might have related to their condition ◼

Identify areas/ objects/ facilities/ hazards where colour applications supporting safe, independent, and easy movement of occupants with ageing eyes or vision impairment might help. ◼

Ask the occupant whether he/she would like specific colours in certain areas/ rooms/ spaces to stimulate or improve his/her feeling when he/she is in that area/ room/ space ◼

Targeted strategies for vision impairment

Apply bright colours or highly contrasting colour combinations on areas and/or objects requiring specific attention or which are used commonly by the occupant(s). ◼

Apply bright white or yellow against darker coloured backgrounds such as dark red, dark grey or black, on safety warning or hazardous elements to prevent the occupant(s) from falls or injuries. ◼

Apply very light and saturated colours against very dark colours, to define small or narrow physical boundaries, such as step edges, handrails, door handles and door frames ◼

Apply white or light colours on floors that require regular cleaning or maintenance, such as kitchen and bathroom, to allow the occupant(s) to identify dirt or rubbish on the floor ◼

Apply colour coding for different objects or an object with different features, which serve different functions, so the occupant(s) can identify and memorise the location and function of each object or feature. ◼

Maintain the consistency of colour coding by applying colours with the same hue, saturation and lightness on similar areas/ objects/ features, or on different areas/ objects/ features with similar function. ◼

Apply colours with certain associations for the occupant(s). For example, use red which is associated with "stop" to signify "turn off" function. ◼

Ensure that the number of colour codes allows the occupant(s) to easily memorise the colours and their functions.

Make sure any of the colours applied are liked by the occupant(s) and that they make them feel positive. Remember colour and its combinations have psychological, social, cultural and financial aspects.

On-line tools that can help with the selection of contrasting colours are:

- The Colour Contrast Analyser by Vision Australia (Vision Australia, 2012)
- Colour Contrast Check (Snook.ca, 2015)
- Luminosity Colour Contrast Ratio Analyser (Juicy Studio, 2016) and
- CUBE (Palette, 2016).

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