

Corporate Accessible Communications Guide

FINAL

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Many thousands of people living in the South West have specific communication needs, including people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, blind or have a visual impairment, those who have a head injury or learning difficulties, those who have literacy skills gaps and those who do not use English as their first language.
- 1.2 The information contained in this document deals with the provision of written (including electronic) information, ensuring that Disabled people receive information in a format of their choice. Disabled people or people requesting information in an alternative language should not be disadvantaged in terms of time, inconvenience, effort or discomfort. This guide aims to raise awareness of the range of issues and provide the organisation's staff with practical solutions to meet these diverse needs.
- 1.3 The development of a Corporate Accessible Communications Guide will provide guidance for making information produced by your organisation more accessible in light of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

2. Plain language

2.1 Before you prepare your text, consider whether you have chosen the most appropriate form of communication, for example a poster may be more likely to be seen and read than a lengthy leaflet.

2.2 To make your documents clear and precise, you need to be clear in your mind:

- Who are you addressing
- What do you want to tell them
- What do they want and need to know
- What do you want them to do as a result

2.3 When deciding upon your text, consider the following points:

- Sentences should be no longer than 20 to 25 words;
- Use simple language that your audience understands for example, words like "we" and "you" instead of "the client" or "the applicant";
- Split the information into short paragraphs or sections;
- Where ever possible, use plenty of active verbs (active verbs make the sentences more direct and easier to understand) , instead of passive;

For example: Enquiries have been made by us (passive) or we have made enquiries (active).

- Be concise;
- Use clear, helpful headings, with consistent and suitable ways of making them stand out from the text;
- When using abbreviations, write in full in the first instance and then adopt the abbreviation;
- On forms, be sure that the questions follow a logical flow and that there is plenty of space for people to put their answers, and;
- If documents need to use technical terms, always have a glossary at the beginning.

The Plain English Campaign will advise on producing documents in plain English. They will also edit documents into plain English for you. A booklet giving details of their service is available by contacting them at the following address:

Plain English Campaign

PO Box 3

New Mills

High Peak

SK22 4QP

Telephone: 01663 744409

Fax: 01663 747038

3. Language, terminology and etiquette

3.1 Organisations' staff will communicate with colleagues, partner organisations and the wider public in many ways. The language used should give these individuals a clear message that diversity is valued and individual differences are respected.

3.2 The use of discriminatory, prejudicial or exclusive language indicates a lack of professionalism and encourages the exclusion, devaluing and stereotyping of groups or individuals. Discriminatory or exclusionary language may be directed at many different groups of people identified by their:

- Age;
- Caring responsibilities;
- Disability;
- Gender;
- Race (including Gypsies & Travellers, migrant workers and asylum seekers & refugees);
- Religion or Belief;
- Sexual Orientation, or;
- Transgender status.

3.3 It is important to remember that 'language' does not just mean the words that you say. It can include visual representations and body language.

4. Best practice for all printed information

4.1 All written and printed information should follow these guidelines:

a) Typeface

- Typeface should be plain rather than ornamental (for example Arial or Tahoma is plain, Times New Roman and Georgia are ornamental)
- Type size should be at least 12 point and preferably 14 point for all documents. Where new marketing materials are being produced we recommend that 12 point font is used.
- Bold type should only be used for titles and/ or short pieces of text
- Underlining and italics should be avoided
- Upper case text should be kept to a minimum

b) Paper and ink

- The better the contrast between the background and the text, the more legible the text will be. Black text on a light background provides best contrast.
- Paper should be white, cream or yellow
- Choose uncoated paper, rather than glossy to avoid glare

- Use paper that is thick enough to stop text showing through (for example 90gsm)

c) Page layout

- Avoid background printing of text or graphics as this will affect the contrast
- Avoid using background fill, but if you do ensure good contrast
- Line length should be in the region of 50-65 characters
- All text should be left justified
- Line spacing should be 1.5 to 2.0 lines
- Words at line ends should not be hyphenated
- Text should not be wrapped around graphics
- Headings and bullets should be used to assist navigation
- Illustrations should be clearly labelled and on websites toggled

d) Pictures and images

- Sets of images and pictures used within documents should reflect the diversity of the region and therefore could include: younger and older people, disabled people, women, men, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, people of different religions or beliefs, gay men, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. However, where only one or two images

are being used in a document it is not necessary to represent every equality group in each picture.

5. Formatting of specific communications

5.1 Designing forms

- It is important to remember that a person with a visual impairment often needs a generous amount of space to fill in details that have to be handwritten. It is recommended that these areas take the form of a blank box as opposed to ruled lines.
- 'Tick' boxes also need to be enlarged.
- These adjustments will also benefit people with conditions that affect their manual dexterity, such as arthritis.

5.2 PowerPoint presentations

- Slides should have a good contrast for example, black text on a white or cream background or white text on a black background.
- Headings should be relevant to the slide.
- Headings should not be underlined.
- Headings should not be in upper case.
- The recommended font size for headings is 36 point in bold.

- The recommended font size for sub headings is 28 point in bold.
- Typeface should be plain rather than ornamental (for example Arial or Tahoma is plain. Times New Roman and Georgia are ornamental).
- The minimum size of text should be 24 point.
- Large blocks of text should be avoided.
- Italics should not be used.
- Bullet points should be used consistently using no more than 5 per slide.
- Text should never be overlaid across images.
- Images should be clear and uncluttered.
- Complex images, such as flow charts should be provided in accessible hard copy.
- Slide transition should be wiped left to right, at medium speed.
- Remember it may be necessary to provide hard copies of any electronic presentation as a reasonable adjustment.

5.3 Websites

- Web based documents should be available in Word format as well as PDF to allow people to make their own adjustments to the text, formatting or layout.
- Seek to obtain AAA standard.
- Text should be at least 12 point.

- Typeface should be plain rather than ornamental (for example Arial or Tahoma is plain. Times New Roman and Georgia are ornamental).
- Pictures should be toggled.
- Consider providing alternative formats and access options for example 'browse aloud' or British Sign Language (BSL) video.

6. Alternative formats

6.1 Historically, the concept of alternative formats has been linked solely to visual impairment, however people with a range of impairments benefit from alternative formats.

6.2 People with dyslexia can significantly benefit from text to speech, something that can easily be provided from a digital copy of text. Similarly, people with mental health issues may cope with listening to text read aloud better than they might cope with sitting reading a book. In many cases, disabled individuals are struggling with traditional texts when alternatives are available.

6.3 Alternative formats may include:

- Producing large print documents;
- Producing documents in Braille;

- Providing information on computer disk;
- Producing information on CD or audiocassette;
- Producing information in moon (Moon allows people who are blind or partially sighted to read by touch. It is a code of raised shapes);
- Producing information in plain English with symbols;
- Producing information on video or DVD (for example, sign language);
- Communicating information through an interpreter (BSL or another language), speech to text or;
- Translating information into different written or spoken languages.

6.4 **Appendix 1** provides more detail about each of these formats.

6.5 It is reasonable to expect different formats of general and mass distributed documents to be available immediately.

6.6 It would not be cost effective to produce other communications in these alternative formats as a matter of course. It is therefore important that an accessibility statement is published on all organisation materials in at least 14 point with specific contact details. The organisations standard accessibility statement is as follows:

‘If you would like this information on audio tape, in Braille, large print, any other format or interpreted in a language other than English, please contact..... ‘

6.7 It is important that alternative formats are produced in a reasonable period of time (two weeks) and that this service is provided at no additional cost to the person requesting it. Any set deadlines for consultation periods etc should take into consideration the time taken to produce and provide alternative formats.

6.8 If requested, written documents should be translated in to community languages. The most commonly spoken community languages are different for different parts of the region and therefore consideration should be given to publishing the accessibility statement in a particular language if the publication is going to a targeted area in the South West, for example in Somerset you may print the statement in Polish.

6.9 The top five requested languages in the South West at December 2008 were:

- Polish;
- Bengali;
- Chinese;

- Portugese, and;
- Hindi.

6.10 Monitoring and recording of requests for documents in an alternative format or language should be maintained. By using this information the organization will be better able to align the service it delivers and be more cost effective.



7. Moving forward

7.1 Following all of the recommendations within this guidance will help your organisation to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. **Appendix 2** is a checklist which encapsulates all of the information in this guidance and more.