

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Date	Wednesday, 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2001
Time	9.30am
Venue	Committee room 3, National Assembly for Wales

# **GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES ON PRODUCING ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION**

## **Introduction**

There are approximately 400,000 people with a disability in Wales. These guidelines provide guidelines provide advice and guidance on the production of accessible information to ensure that disabled people are able to gain easy access to information produced by the Assembly and that the Assembly is an exemplar of best practice. The good practice identified in these guidelines has been endorsed by the Wales Council for the Blind and RNIB Cymru and is consistent with guidelines to be published by the Central Office of Information for other Government Departments.

The Assembly produces information for the public in many different formats, including: publications, public information leaflets, letters, and consultation documents. Communicating effectively with disabled people is of crucial importance. If disabled people are denied information in their preferred medium they may reasonably assume that the Assembly is not meeting their needs in the development of its policies and programmes.

But in addition to the operational case for taking the needs of disabled people into account in the way it provides information, there are also legal requirements on the Assembly. The Government of Wales Act requires the Assembly to make arrangements for securing that its functions are exercised with due regard to equality of opportunity. Moreover, part III of the Disability Discrimination Act came into force in October 1999. This requires service providers to make 'reasonable adjustment' to ensure that disabled people can access the

services provided. This includes access to information and the same principles apply to letters, particularly if they are to have a wide audience. The Assembly has made a commitment in Better Wales.com to equality of opportunity. The production of information in accessible formats will be a demonstration of that commitment.

Whilst the guidelines attempt to cover most common requirements, a flexible approach is of key importance and systems need to be in place to deal with unexpected enquiries as swiftly as possible.

Developing information in alternative formats will involve costs which should be taken into account in the planning stage. Under no circumstances should the additional costs of producing documents in alternative formats be passed to the disabled person requesting the information. However, if a charge is levied for a publication, then it is reasonable for the same charge to be made for a version in an alternative format.

When information is available in an alternative format, its availability should be clearly referred to in the text: e.g.

**"Copies of this leaflet are also available in large print or on audio tape"**

When it is decided that the likely demand for material in an alternative format does not justify the preparation, its text should nevertheless refer to the possibility of making the information available in alternative formats.

### Contacts for further advice and guidance

#### Communications

Iona Wyn Williams ext. 5582

#### Print Procurement Unit

John Sweeney ext. 3241

#### Equality Policy Unit

Kevin Willoughby ext. 6266

Christine Morgan ext. 3575

## **Developing a Strategy**

It is recommended that each Division, responsible for producing information for the public, considers the needs of the audience, the formats likely to be necessary and the cost implications of producing information in accessible formats, to help meet the needs of disabled people.

It should not be assumed that everyone is aware of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, and information on the legal obligations under the Act should be passed on to all team members who have a role in the production of information. The Equality Policy Unit will be happy to provide further information and advice on the duties required by the Act and how specific needs can be met.

The policy should detail a planning process which takes account of the following issues;

- The purpose for which the material is needed i.e. public meeting, information leaflet, consultation document. .
- Anticipation of the needs of the particular audience who will receive the information e.g. people with visual impairments.
- Identification of ownership and responsibility for producing the information and responding to subsequent requests for information in alternative formats.
- Minimum standards of information provision that the Group will produce, eg font size and type, availability of alternative formats
- Timing of the production of alternative formats
- Monitoring procedures

Solutions should be proportionate to the likely requirements of the target audience. In many cases it may only be necessary to produce information in a simple, legible format following the guidelines at the end of this note. For large scale consultation exercises, consideration of the needs of disabled people will always be necessary.

Divisions should consult with Equality Policy Unit, Communications Directorate and Print Procurement at an early stage in the planning process – see contact details provided in the introduction.

## **People who are most likely to need information in alternative formats.**

Detailed below Here are some examples of people who may need information in alternative formats and some ways of making information accessible. It is important to note that the examples given are not exhaustive and Divisions should consider who their target audience is and be creative.

1. People who cannot hear spoken information, nor use a voice telephone, because they are deaf or hearing impaired. People who are profoundly Deaf and use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language.
  - It may be possible to provide a textphone or Minicom number when telephone contact details are provided in the information.
  - Make arrangements for face to face meetings.
  - Make information available on a website (ensuring that website is designed to be accessible to people with disabilities).
  - Providing BSL interpreters at public meetings.
2. People who have difficulty reading because they have are blind or have visual impairment:
  - Always ensure the information is available in clear standard print;
  - Consider using large print; or providing the information on audio tape.
  - Production of Braille documents are relatively inexpensive and should include tactile diagrams when diagrams are included in the original document, but advice should always be sought from Print Procurement Unit.
  - Consider using video (with audio description) or other electronic formats such as: disk; CD ROM; DVD; e-mail or on a website (ensuring that website is designed to

be accessible to people with disabilities).

3. People who have a speech impairment and therefore find it difficult to use a telephone.
  - Consider providing the opportunity for face to face contact as this is always easier than a telephone, or e-mail if this facility is available to them.
4. People who have a learning disability and may have a low standard of literacy.
  - Always ensure the use of clear standard print;
  - Consider the use of video;
  - Makaton or other symbol system can be used for short simple texts
  - Consider producing an abbreviated simplified text.
5. People who have dexterity problems which make it difficult to hold or manipulate a printed document or use a keyboard
  - Consider producing the information on video or audio tape.

The importance of clearly being able to understand the needs of individual customers is essential and must be taken into account whenever possible. Always remember that two people are never the same. It is important **never to make assumptions about someone's capabilities based on your own preconceptions.**

## **Producing Text – Good Practice Guidelines**

- Where possible, avoid using tabulation and indents

- Use single spacing between sentences, words and characters
- Use words rather than abbreviations or symbols. For example, care of, not c/o; account, not a/c; equals, not =
- Punctuation: keep to a minimum of , ; : / . ( )
- Page numbers should not be referred to in the text, as the large print version will be different. Different content pages, with page numbers, should be created for standard and large print versions.
- Identify key sections or paragraphs by giving them a name or number and refer to them this way in the text.
- Tables and charts in standard and large print versions will need to be dealt with differently in the basic text file
- tables may need to be altered to make them read logically
  - charts and diagrams may need to be described in a written document
- take care not to omit important details in the conversion
- A contents page is essential. A short summary at the beginning of a document will make it easier to access.
- Information should always be produced in plain language.

## **CLEAR PRINT GUIDELINES**

### Type size

- the recommended minimum type size is 12 point
- now more commonly used is point 14, this enables a considerable proportion of visually impaired people to access standard information
- the most commonly used large print is size 18 point
- avoid use of block capital letters
- where correspondence is received in a larger font, the response should be issued in a

font of the same size.

## Font Weight

- Font types without serifs are the easiest to read for most people with a visual impairment
- use medium or bold fonts; avoid light fonts
- use bold for emphasis, rather than using uppercase
- avoid use of italics
- reversing out (white letters on black background) only works if the size and weight of characters are sufficient bold. Use this design sparingly.

## Spacing

- word spacing should always be even
- linked paragraphs should not be widely spaced
- initials or words should not be divided or split across a line break
- the space between lines (known as leading) should be generous
- indents, if used, should not drive too far in.

## Contrast

- white or yellow paper has the best contrast with black ink
- avoid printing text too close to or over photographs, designs and illustrations
- ensure that your printer can produce a clear and crisp copy

# **LAYOUT AND DESIGN GUIDELINES**

## Layout and Design

- always keep layouts clear
- group information logically
- guide the user with a contents and index page where possible
- break up large blocks of text with a space or bullet points
- when changing from standard print, size may alter the current layout , especially when columns are involved. Check page beginnings and endings, as these may have changed

- do not arrange text around picture objects, as varying line lengths can be hard to read.
- always use matt paper.

### Bi-lingual documents

Care must be taken when producing bilingual documents. The best solution is to keep both languages distinct from each other by using the reverse/flip over style for documents. Alternating Welsh and English sentences may easily cause confusion.

### Columns

- allow white space around columns
- a vertical line will help to guide the reader's eye

### Justification

- use left justification only, this will avoid uneven spacing between words
- do not use centre justification
- do not split words at end of lines
- avoid hyphenation

### Pictures or Diagrams

- people with learning difficulties or low literacy levels may find illustrations helpful, although this may not be the case for people with other disabilities
- pictorial materials for people with a visual disability may require additional audio description

## **PUBLIC NOTICES**

- It is not expected that all notices placed in the press will be produced in 12 point font, the Disability Rights Commission has advised that 7 point could be considered reasonable however the following points should be considered,
- The likely importance of the notice to disabled people must be considered and larger font used if appropriate.
- Block Capitals and Bold should be used to highlight important content.
- The Notice should make clear (in a minimum of 12 point font) that larger print



versions and alternative formats are available on request.

- Advise local access groups of the notice and the policy to provide alternative formats on request. Disability Wales can advise on contact with access groups.
- Use a vertical line to distinguish between English and Welsh text, where they run side by side.
- Consider whether a media news story or other means could be appropriate to alert the public to the issue.
- Be creative in considering how the information may be made accessible.

## Job Advertisements

- All job advertisement should be in a minimum of 104 point.
- Job titles and a strapline advertising the availability of alternative format versions should appear in 14 point.
- The advertisement should be brief and advise that further information is available via an application pack.
- Format of all the information in the application pack should follow the guidelines as for **Clear Print Guidelines** above.
- Further information is available from Communication Directorate.

## **Emails (internal and External)**

- All emails should be in 12 point and use Arial font.
- Where correspondence is received in a larger font size, the response should be issued in a font of the same size.

## **Alternative Formats - Braille**

### Production and Presentation

- Always seek advice from the print procurement unit.
- Braille documents should not be produced in-house for external individuals or organisations.