

DRD

Guide to

Making Information

Accessible

September 2009

DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**This publication is available, on request, in large print,
Braille and audio alternative formats**

DRD GUIDE TO MAKING INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Department for Regional Development (DRD) Equality Unit is responsible for driving forward and providing guidance on Section 75 obligations to all business areas throughout the Department. The Unit monitors the commitments in the Department's Equality Scheme, including the commitment to ensure that the information and services DRD disseminates and provides are made as accessible and equitable as possible.
- 1.2 The main functions of DRD are to shape the long-term development of the region, to maintain and develop transportation networks, airport and harbour services and to develop and maintain the policy and regulatory environment which provides modern, high quality water and sewerage services.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Guide is to strive to achieve best practice in ensuring that Agencies and Divisions provide customers with accessible information as quickly and effectively as possible.
- 1.4 This guide is available, on request, in a range of alternative formats.
- 1.5 It should be noted that this guide relates only to the equality aspects of communication. A wider Departmental Review of Communications has been completed and all actions identified implemented.
- 1.6 In drafting the Guide the following considerations have been taken into account: -
 - Existing provision of information/services in accessible formats e.g. Braille, audio, large print, minority ethnic languages, digital and internet, etc;
 - Feedback from S75 representative groups;
 - Statutory requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (including subsequent amendments as a result of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006);
 - Need to consider specific outreach measures;
 - Resource implications; and
 - Recommendations of the cross-departmental Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) working group on minority ethnic people.
 - Likely demand for information in such formats;

1.7 The Guide has also been prepared in the light of the OFMDFM draft guidance “Guide to Making Information Accessible”.

1.8 The Department recognises that:

- Everyone has the **right to equal access to information**;
- People require information to be made available in **formats** and in **ways that suit their particular requirements**;
- When information is made available in a preferred format it should be done so **without undue delay or, if appropriate, any charge** (but see paragraph 1.9 in relation to the charging provisions of the Publications Scheme);
- The Department needs to be **proactive** in ensuring people know where and how to obtain the information they need; and also anticipatory in identifying any reasonable adjustments that may be needed.
- Where preferred formats are not appropriate, the Department needs to make **alternative arrangements**. These may include arranging face-to-face meetings to pass on information; giving an oral briefing; or providing additional staff time to help customers understand and complete forms etc.
- Some people may require the **assistance of a supporter**, for example a personal assistant, carer, interpreter etc, who would accompany them when information is being provided.

1.9 It should be noted that the provisions of this Guide in relation to equality of opportunity in accessing information are **without prejudice to any rights to information contained in the Department’s Publications Scheme**. In particular, whilst most information can be accessed free of charge, certain publications and other categories of information (listed in the Scheme) will only be available on receipt of payment. In specific cases where Divisions have difficulty or uncertainty in reconciling the provisions of this Guide with those of the Publication Scheme they should consult with the Equality Unit on ext. 40867 or 40850.

2. Identifying Customer Needs

- 2.1 The Department recognises that there is a risk that some sections of the public will not enjoy equality of opportunity in accessing information from the Department.
- 2.2 These people have the right to expect a level of service consistent with that offered to the rest of the community from the Department in a tailored manner.
- 2.3 From the outset, even before a consultation document has been written, the Department should consider all appropriate forms of communications including consultation with representative groups, where appropriate.
- 2.4 Those who may require information in a variety of formats include:
- **People who have difficulty accessing information** because they:
 - Have a visual impairment which means they cannot see text, images or moving pictures;
 - Have a learning disability i.e. dyslexia;
 - Have mental health difficulties;
 - Are profoundly deaf and use Sign Language as their primary means of communication, or are hard of hearing, and cannot use a voice telephone or access spoken information;
 - Have a low standard of literacy; or
 - Some combination of these.
 - **People who have a speech impairment** and therefore find it difficult to use a phone;
 - **People who have dexterity difficulties** which make it hard to hold or manipulate a printed document or use a keyboard.
- 2.5 These groups will also include a large number of **older and younger people**, and some people will have **multiple disabilities**.
- 2.6 The **checklist** at **Annex A** provides further advice on how to communicate with people with disabilities. **Annex H** provides further information on providing accessible information for those with a learning disability. During 2007/08 the Equality Commission published draft guidance on consulting with children and young people. Following the release of the final guidance the Department

will produce a further Annex to the Guide advising on how to communicate with children and young people.

- 2.7 Members of **black and minority ethnic communities** in Northern Ireland and **local regional** or **minority language** speakers are as likely as the rest of the population to have disabilities which affect their ability to access information in addition to possible language barriers. Although demand for alternative format documents in languages other than English is likely to be low, it should not be overlooked (see Section 6).
- 2.8 Divisions and Agencies should also be aware that, in addition to adopting a “good practice” approach to the provision of information, the Department must comply with the provisions of Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 where it provides goods facilities and services to the public. **Annex B** outlines in brief the provisions of the Part III of the DDA.

3. Improving our printed documents

- 3.1 In considering the accessibility and equitable requirements of people, some basic steps can be taken to **improve the overall clarity** of documents currently produced by the Department. These steps also make it easier to provide information in accessible formats.
- 3.2 The use of **plain language** improves comprehension and saves time and money. Documents that are produced in plain English are **easier to translate** into other languages and alternative formats. For guidance on using plain language, the Department has produced a Clear Writing Guide which is accessible at: <http://drdtoday.intranet.nics.gov.uk/clearwriting.pdf>
- 3.3 **Making text and images easier to see** helps everyone. For people who are visually impaired the **clarity and size of the text** may determine whether or not they are able to read a document. Using a clear, simple font such as Arial in size 14 will aid clarity.
- 3.4 A page of close-set type daunts many readers, so the **layout** of documents should be made **clear and simple**.
- 3.5 All pages and paragraphs should be numbered using Arabic numbering, i.e. 1, 2, 3.
- 3.6 In addition, all public documents should include the following information:
- Appropriate contact number
 - Fax number
 - Text phone number
 - Website address and e-mail address
- 3.7 Further information on improving the accessibility of documents is available at **Annex C**.
- 3.8 Documents produced for public distribution should include the statement: **'This publication is available, on request, in large print, Braille and audio alternative formats. Please advise us as soon as possible if you require this'**. This should be located at the beginning of documents in large, clear print.

4. Use of Alternative Formats

4.1 The requirements of the target audience are paramount in deciding how the information should be made available. Procedures should be in place to ensure that accessible formats identified as necessary are available at the same time as standard print and that access to these formats is given, if requested. The Department should endeavour to meet all requests for information in alternative formats.

4.2 The following formats should be considered and, where appropriate, adopted when producing public information to meet the specific communication requirements of the groups identified at Section 2 above:

- Large print (18 point) in a clear font;
- Computer disc, DVD and other digital formats, including Websites;
- Audio - CD-R;
- Video with either sign language inserts or subtitles;
- Braille;
- Easy-Read format;
- DAISY Digital disc;
- Tactile maps, plans or diagrams;
- Translation into ethnic minority languages (executive summaries) - see also Section 6.
- Advertising in specialised publications, e.g. audio newsletters such as Sound Vision Ulster, community radio etc, for relevant services or public appointments.

Annex D highlights the comparative expense and timescales likely to be incurred for alternative formats. Simple word processing, large print and computer disks are the low cost alternative formats. Sign Language videos, and CD-Rom and Website formats are the most expensive. Staff should consider the sources of material available to them to ensure that turn around time for material is within expected timescales. Reasonable adjustment is a requirement of the DDA and must be considered in that light. Should a delay be encountered in producing time-sensitive documents in an accessible format, such as consultation

documents, an extension should be granted to the individual to ensure they have an equal amount of time to make their reply.

5. Events/Meetings

- 5.1 In addition to the advice given at Section 4 above the following points should also **be considered**, as appropriate, when Divisions/Agencies are organising meetings with members of the groups specified in Section 2, and events involving members of the public such as exhibitions, press and other conferences, seminars etc to ensure that involvement of such groups is made accessible and equitable.

The onus is always on the organizing department to facilitate any reasonable adjustments, including booking sign language interpreters or speech to text operators etc for those people who require this aid to communication. It should not be assumed that people who require these communication aids will book their own. The services have to be booked weeks in advance otherwise the event may have to be rescheduled if these services are not available. Providers should therefore be anticipatory in identifying any reasonable adjustments.

- All invitations to meetings and events to include a section requesting **particular requirements**, e.g. dietary requirements and distributions in accessible formats to people who cannot read standard print;
- All invitations to clearly state that the venue is **physically accessible**. This should include entrance accessibility such as **ramps and handholds**, clear signage, and access to catering, conference and toilet facilities. An audit may be required to ensure the suitability of venues;
- A **suitable time** for meeting;
- Use of a **Signer** or Specialist in sign language modification;
- Use of **an interpreter/translator**;
- **Video conferencing**;
- Provision of a **loop system**; A loop system can be particularly useful in a reception area, meeting room or public office;

- **Exhibition material** to reflect the communication requirements of people with a learning disability and people with **visual impairment**, (e.g. black ink on white or yellow paper to be used to meet the communication requirements of people with visual impairment);
- **Requirements of the audience** to be considered when preparing material for information packs;
- **Introductions** by officials and speakers should be conducted in turn, to allow people with visual disabilities to be sure where people are seated in relation to themselves;
- **Appropriate signage** to be used for directions e.g. fire escape, toilets, etc;
- **Audio aids** e.g. use of microphone, and the use of overheads, which are easily read at back of room;
- **Announcements of evacuation procedures** to take account of the needs of disabled people;
- **Dietary requirements**;
- **Designated car parking**;
- **Public Transport provision**, such as distance and accessibility from public transport links, should be taken into consideration;
- **Provision of childcare/respite for Carers**;
- **Provision of Guide Dog facilities**, e.g. toilet facilities, exercise area.

6. Translation, Transcription & Interpretation

- 6.1 The frequency of requests to the Department for translations and alternative materials has historically been very low, although this could possibly change in the future depending on the nature of the document and more probably the increase in requests from people with disabilities and those from black and minority ethnic communities.
- 6.2 Under the terms of the **European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages**, the Department has specific obligations regarding the use of Irish. **Detailed guidance on the use of Irish** in official business was issued by the Secretary of State in August 2005. The Equality Unit has also drawn up **Codes of Courtesy** for dealing with queries and correspondence in **Irish** and **Ulster-Scots**, which are available to view on the Department's website.
- 6.3 Queries on the use of Irish, Ulster Scots or minority ethnic languages should be passed in the first instance to the Equality Unit, who will consult with Linguistic Diversity Branch in DCAL, and will draw on translation services as required.
- 6.4 Translation into Irish or other European languages currently costs approximately £15 per 100 words, and translation into Urdu and Chinese costs approximately £25 per 100 words. Please be aware that some translators have a minimum charge; it may be more cost-effective to translate a number of shorter documents together.
- 6.5 Divisions and Agencies should also consider the requirements of people with **specific learning difficulties** and particularly **aphasia** (loss of ability to communicate in speech). The effects of dyslexia vary from person to person, but are most commonly characterized by a difficulty in learning literacy skills. Organisations such as Speechmatters (for those with aphasia) or The British Dyslexia Association are useful contact points for information and advice (see **Annex E**).
- 6.6 The Royal National Institute for the Deaf NI (RNID NI) provides a range of interpretation and transcription services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. This includes BSL, ISL sign language interpreters, Lip speakers, Speed Text operators, Palantype (speech-to-text) operators, Note Takers, and Deaf-Blind interpreters. A list of methods, which can be used to improve communication with people who are deaf or hard of hearing, is attached at **Annex F**.

- 6.7 Organisations such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind NI (RNIB NI) and Visual Access NI can advise about the transcription of documents in both Braille and audio formats for accessing people who are blind or partially-sighted. RNIB have studios suitable for audio recordings, and can provide accredited speakers to produce audio copies of publications in languages other than English.
- 6.8 MENCAP can advise about the transcription of documents for people with a learning disability into Easy-Read formats. This may not be suitable for all types of document, particularly highly-level or technical documents. Business areas should consider whether, in this case, a meeting with the individual requesting an Easy-Read document would be more effective.

7. Customer-Facing Staff

- 7.1 The Department provides information to some customers through staff at the **point of service delivery**. The Department has therefore to consider how this “first contact”, often at a counter or advice desk, could be geared to meet the different requirements of people. All staff with a customer-facing role received training on Disability and Equality of Opportunity issues during 2007 and 2008, and this should be arranged for new staff as a matter of priority.
- 7.2 OFMDFM “Barriers to Access to Essential Services¹” research (December 2001) suggests that:
- “People with learning disabilities believed that their access to services was closely linked to the level of support they received from statutory and voluntary agencies”;
 - “People with hearing difficulties indicated that the increasing use of the telephone as a route to accessing services created particular problems for them”;
 - And members of the Chinese community felt: “That interpreters were very necessary when members of the community had to interact with officials.”
- 7.3 These difficulties are not quick or easy to overcome, but the advice given at **Annex G**, on improving general communication, will be of use. This includes the provision of low-level counters, induction-loop systems and staff training on textphones to ensure a high standard of service is provided to all customers, regardless of disability.
- 7.4 People with **learning disabilities** will often need individual personal support to access information. Staff will need to be encouraged to show a willingness to help and will need to allow sufficient time to do so. In some instances people with a learning disability might wish to bring an advocate or supporter with them. For information and advice contact MENCAP (Contact details in **Annex E**).
- 7.5 The recent Best Practice guidance on providing public services to deaf people has recommended a facility for taking and exchanging written notes as a simple and effective aid for frontline staff who may need to provide a service to deaf and hard of hearing people at very short notice.

¹ Barriers to access to essential services, OFMDFM, Dec 2001
POL/854MM/JW

8 Web Accessibility

- 8.1 It is the responsibility of the Information Management Unit (IMU) to ensure that the Department's web development work takes into account issues relating to accessibility. There are a number of practical issues which will be addressed centrally, for example:
- Availability of a text only version
 - Facility to ensure all images uploaded are described properly (according to Guidelines for UK Government Websites)
 - To ensure all downloadable information is suitably sized to accommodate modem links by end users
- 8.2 Accessibility issues and guidance relating to equality are covered in the Guidelines for UK Government Websites adopted by the NI Government, which can be viewed at:
<http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=188>
- 8.3 All NICS websites are designed to meet agreed central government standards covering both accessibility and presentation. In accessibility terms this translates to compliance with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines and achieving Priority Checkpoint 2 (AA level) standard.
- 8.4 As part of the development process, each site is audited centrally and independently by DFP staff. They produce a report on the site and, if priority remedial action is needed, this work is completed before the site goes "live".
- 8.5 Important issues which staff should take account of when preparing content for the web include:
- **Structure of content.** This will be guided largely by the structure of the web itself. However, a pyramid structure is the accepted format for content so as users 'drill' down through the website they can access more detailed information.
 - **Style of content.** It is important that the content posted on the web is succinct, clear and is self-contained as much as possible. It is usual to make use of short sentences; bullet points at the higher levels; and if a user needs more detail they can drill down further as required.
 - **Size of content.** Ensure there is an option of a single file download as well as a number of smaller sectional files for

each publication. This makes it easier for people using text-to-voice conversion software to access content.

- 8.4 Care should be taken to ensure that departmental websites contain information that is accurate and consistent and where possible present a standard interface to the citizen. An inter-Departmental Editorial Board has been established under the leadership of the Executive Information Service to address this issue, operating under the aegis of the E-Government Board.
- 8.5 When considering promotional material, including website presence, staff should contact the Information Management Unit (IMU) on ext. 41055) and, as appropriate, technical support from Information Systems Unit (ISU).

9 Training & Development

- 9.1 The Department has an ongoing commitment to integrate equal opportunities knowledge, understanding and practice into the day-to-day working of the Department. All staff and their managers agree Personal Development Plans annually, identifying specific training requirements, including those in the area of equality and human rights.
- 9.2 Training in the requirements of Section 75 and Human Rights is given to all staff joining the Department. Management grades, from Executive Officer to Deputy Principal, have received a half-day general awareness course addressing Human Rights and Section 75 responsibilities. In addition, training on the methodology of equality impact assessments and consultation is provided for all relevant staff. These training packages will be extended to ensure awareness and use of this best practice guide.
- 9.3 All staff in DRD have received Equal Opportunity and Diversity Awareness Training which included disability awareness. The content of the training programme was agreed with the NICS Centre for Applied Learning (CAL). New staff will now attend CAL for this training, as soon as practical after joining DRD.
- 9.4 The Department's Equality Unit, in close liaison with the Departmental Training Commissioner, will monitor and evaluate training to ensure that it is appropriate and effective.

10 Monitoring Review and Customer Feedback

- 10.1 The intention of the Department is to establish arrangements, which ensure that **all** sections of the public enjoy equality of opportunity in accessing information provided by the Department. The Department will therefore conduct periodic evaluations to assess the effectiveness of this Guide.
- 10.2 The Equality Unit will monitor the implementation of this Guide by proactively requesting members of the Department's Equality Working Group to provide feedback from their Divisions and Agencies on the style, structure, available formats and means of access to Departmental information.
- 10.3 The Guide will also be discussed at the bi-annual Section 75 Forum with representatives of the Voluntary and Community Sector, who will be proactively invited to contribute and comment on the content of the Guide.
- 10.4 This will include seeking comments on the **quality** and **accessibility** of information from customers. Divisions and Agencies should themselves determine the best method to gather this data. To ensure good practice and consistency members of the Department's Equality Working Group should exchange information on the methods used by their Division/Agency to gather data. Staff will also be consulted to gauge the benefits or otherwise that accrued from having access to the best practice and the levels to which it was used to facilitate better customer access to information.
- 10.5 The Department will review the implementation of this best practice Guide to Making Information Accessible by 30 September 2010 in order to:
- Gauge the usefulness of the Guide to staff;
 - Assess customer feedback;
 - Research the ever-changing environment of communication methods and channels;
 - Exchange views and information with other Government Departments; and
 - Provide the basis for amending the Guide.
- 10.6 During the review consultations will take place with Section 75 groups and other interested parties to ensure that the Department is aware of any change in information requirements in relation to

accessible and equitable information. The Department will also monitor requests for Accessible formats centrally to analyse uptake.

11 Conclusion

11.1 This guide offers advice on achieving **best practice** in communicating with those who may experience difficulties in accessing information provided in the usual formats. It also provides a good practice checklist. Much of the advice given is simply common sense, and it is just as important to learn from individual experience.

11.2 The most important message is to “keep it clear and simple”. Use clear typefaces, design and language, and **consult** your customers about their requirements and preferences.

The Equality Unit, Room 413a, Clarence Court, Tel: Ext 40867 or 40850 are happy to advise on all aspects of this guide.

JACKIE GREGG
EQUALITY UNIT

September 2009

Annex A

Good Practice Checklist

- **Consult** your audience and customers as to their needs;
- **Anticipate** the needs of your various audiences in advance of being asked and assess which, if any, accessible format versions are likely to be required. The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), which incorporates the Blind Centre NI, can advise on Braille, large print and audio versions. MENCAP can advise on versions for people with a learning disability;
- **Budget** for producing information in accessible formats at the beginning of the financial year, or at the outset of each project/campaign;
- **Involve your publicity/information branch/unit** from the earliest planning stage;
- **Consider respite**; consideration should be given for provision of respite for Carers at events;
- **Plan ahead.** If you are publicising the availability of accessible formats, it is good practice to make sure that they are available at the same time as the standard print;
- **Keep it simple.** If your document is written in plain language, it will be accessible to a greater number of people and may reduce demand for alternative versions. Avoid the use of acronyms, and explain any technical terms used;
- **Think about type size and font.** 14 point is the minimum size recommended for people with a visual impairment and people with a learning disability and you should use a clear sans serif font such as MS Arial;
- **Consider using illustrations.** Photographs, illustrations and diagrams all aid comprehension and retention of information. When using these care should be taken to portray a positive image of disability rather than reinforcing stereotypes. People with learning disabilities will benefit particularly from illustrations and, in some cases, the use of symbols. (This may also be true for many people for whom English is not their first language). However care should be taken to avoid a presentation becoming complicated for people with significant sight loss;

- **Consider language issues.** For instance, if you are planning minority ethnic language print versions, you should consider, as a matter of good practice, whether you should produce other formats, such as audio formats, in minority ethnic languages. The target group may not always be literate, so it is worth considering if audio formats may be more effective than printed versions;
- **Be helpful.** If you cannot provide exactly what the customer has asked for, explore other possible solutions with the person concerned;
- **Inform customers** what to expect. If there is likely to be a delay in providing a service, explain why and apologise;
- **Provide a range of options.** Where demand for a particular format is likely to be low, you may be able to set up a “call-off contract” which enables you to commission small runs of short documents at short notice: this may be especially important for Braille format;
- **Publicise availability** of accessible format versions, in any general publicity material, in all standard and accessible versions and in publications and media appropriate for the particular audiences. Include directions for obtaining accessible formats prominently at the **beginning** of a document or form, so that people are immediately alerted to their availability;
- **Provide a telephone, fax number and a textphone** number for people with hearing or speech impairments;
- **Consider providing a text message service** for people with hearing or speech impairments to communicate with business areas;
- **Provide e-mail and website addresses** whenever possible. Put documents onto a website designed to be easily accessible;
- **Encourage feedback** from your audience, and respond to it. Reply to your audience in the same format that they use to contact you;
- **Keep records** of the demands made upon your service and what the uptake of accessible formats is, including the number of people accessing information on websites. This will help you when planning future projects;
- **Training.** Consider providing additional disability awareness and customer care training to staff who deal directly with the public;
- **Internal communications.** Ensure all customer-facing staff are aware of what materials are available in accessible formats, and on websites;
- **Share your experiences** and lessons learnt with colleagues in your own and other departments;
- **Review** the strategy regularly and amend it in light of experience;

- **Publicity.** When planning publicity campaigns, producing information in alternative formats should be considered as an integral part of your campaign rather than as an afterthought;
- **Advertising.** When commissioning advertising, consider how you can make this information accessible. For example, television adverts can cater for people with impaired hearing and can include sub-titles or have someone actually signing on screen;
- **Accessible Signage.** Ensure all direction / information signs are in locations that make them easy to follow by all customers.

The Disability Discrimination Act

Don't make assumptions

You will meet disabled people in all aspects of life. Be careful not to make assumptions about their requirements or capabilities based simply on your own preconceptions. It is important to consult your audiences.

Provisions in Part III mean that it is unlawful to discriminate against disabled people by refusing them service, providing service on worse terms or providing a lower standard of service. Part III also requires service providers to make **reasonable adjustments** to the way they provide their goods, facilities and services to make them accessible to disabled people.

Under the Act, where reasonable, a service provider may have to:

- Change a policy, practice or procedure which makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with disabilities to make use of services;
- Provide a reasonable alternative method of making services available where a physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with disabilities to make use of services;
- Provide an auxiliary aid or service if it would enable (or make it easier for) people with disabilities to make use of services.

This duty affects information and advice about services. As such, service providers should examine the provision of information in alternative formats and communication support, such as the use of sign language interpreters.

There are limited grounds for justifying failure to make a reasonable adjustment, such as on health and safety grounds.

It is important for service providers to note that their duty to make reasonable adjustments is owed to disabled people at large and not simply a duty of weighing up each individual request. The reasonable adjustment duty is anticipatory. Service providers should not wait until a disabled person wants to use a service they provide before they give consideration to reasonable adjustments.

Guidance and examples on how to comply with the duties imposed by Part III are available in a **Code of Practice** (see 'Useful sources of advice - Publications' on page 27).

As a matter of good practice, and irrespective of whether the duties in Part III apply or not, Divisions and Agencies should always adopt a positive approach to providing alternative formats of publications in order to ensure information is accessible to as wide an audience as possible.

Be reasonable

Service providers who fail to make 'reasonable adjustments' to their services could risk legal challenge.

Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), the Department is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

The Department has submitted a Disability Action Plan to the Equality Commission underlining how it intends to meet these duties.

- Use **Plain English**, make text clear and easy to see and understand;
- Use short uncomplicated sentences;
- Do not use unnecessary technical detail or jargon. If technical words are unavoidable then include a simple explanation;
- Use a clear design and layout;
- The larger the minimum type size, the more people you will reach. The better the contrast between the background and text, the more legible the text will be. Care should also be taken to avoid light type weights and underlining or setting text in italics as this makes text more difficult to read.
- Stick to even spacing and leave adequate space between text and columns. Do not stretch or condense text to fit, i.e. do not justify text as it makes it harder to read.
- Consider using images for material intended largely for people with a learning disability, for those whom English is not their first language, or young children. Avoid images which reinforce stereotypes e.g. showing people with disabilities as victims;
- Consider producing an easy to read summary that can meet a variety of needs, including being translated into minority ethnic languages or recorded onto CD-R;
- Be aware that too much written information can be a turn off to many people, avoid text that is vague, use a design which is attractive and catches the attention, give examples when and where possible and to show why the information is relevant to them.
- Always detail **at the front** of your document the availability of other accessible formats, and how these can be obtained;
- Always provide details of an accessible Text phone number, and be aware of the Typetalk service which allows contact with a deaf person via an operator over an ordinary telephone;
- Consider accepting feedback in formats other than purely written submissions, e.g. by telephone or using online forms.

Some individuals may be unable to express themselves clearly using the written word, or find it easier to fill in forms available in formats other than paper.

- Always provide a named contact person whom customers can contact if they need further help.
- If you are producing technical information for a non-technical audience consider producing a non-technical summary of this information. More technical information could be included in annexes or provide a glossary of terms for obscure, foreign or technical words.
- Do not cram too many questions on to an application form or too much information into a leaflet.
- Partially sighted people tend to have handwriting that is larger than average, so allow extra space on forms. This will also benefit those who have conditions that affect the use of their hands e.g. arthritis.
- Avoid glossy paper because glare makes it difficult to read. Choose uncoated paper that weighs over 90gsm. If the text is showing through from the reverse side then the paper is too thin.
- For PowerPoint presentations, use a good contrast colour for example white on a blue background, don't use backgrounds that are not solid. Ensure that the size of the font is big enough, for example 36 pt for headings and 28pt for text. Spacing should also be considered and there should be no more than five bullet points per page.

COSTS AND TURN-AROUND TIMES

NB The number of £ signs in the chart is intended to give an impression of cost, ie £ denotes cheapness; ££££££ is expensive. Six £ signs should not be interpreted as six times as expensive as one £ sign.

Format	Turn-around time	Cost	Notes/comments
Large Print to same standard as standard print	Same as for standard print	£££	Design stage should run parallel to that of the standard print version. Unit cost will be higher than standard print because the document will be longer. Overall cost should be less as print runs will be much shorter. Alternatively, produce a single version in 14pt or larger type.
Large Print word processed version	Relatively quick	£	Systems need to be in place to ensure accurate final text is available electronically. Small quantities can be produced in advance or single copies printed off or photocopied as required. Added advantage: once prepared, text can be transmitted electronically.
Large Print Easy-Read version for people with learning disabilities	2-4 weeks, dependant on length	£££	Text for people with learning disabilities must be short, in very plain English, and have plenty of illustrations to help explain the text. The time taken to prepare the text and illustrations means that it is difficult to produce such versions quickly. Not suitable for all types of document. High-level or technical documents may best be explained in a face-to-face meeting with the individual concerned.

Format	Turn-around time	Cost	Notes/comments
Audio CD: professional quality	About 3 weeks	£££	Where possible, professional scripting and voices are preferable, as low quality recordings are not easy to listen to. Digital recording gives superior quality and can be amended more easily. Cassettes are not now normally used.
Audio CD: budget version	Varies – dependent on supplier	£	Only suitable for one-offs or short runs. Not recommended for long or complicated documents or ones likely to need updating.
Braille: 'published' quality	About 4 weeks	££	Desirable for longer print runs. Would include printed cover. Should be supplied by professional suppliers.
Braille: budget version	About 1 week	£	Only suitable for one-offs or short print runs. May be supplied by larger suppliers or by small suppliers such as prison Braille units or individuals, or in-house.
Video	6-12 weeks	££££	Useful medium for people with low levels of literacy. However, should include subtitles for people with a hearing impairment.
British Sign Language Video	10-14 weeks	£££££	Takes a while to assemble necessary contributors. Should also include subtitles and clear, simple voice-over.

Format	Turn-around time	Cost	Notes/comments
Data CD	Potentially quick: depends on complexity of info being presented	£ up to £££££ to prepare £ to duplicate	<p>Type of format may depend on end-user. For a general audience, text should be presented as 'text only' and include a 'Readme file' which explains what information is on the CD, in which format, and how to access it.</p> <p>A number of aids, such as sound, sign language, text, pictures, etc can be combined in the same medium.</p> <p>Providing information on a CD can often be cheaper than printing paper copies.</p>
Websites	Depends on complexity of info being presented	££££££ Initial setup ££ to add to existing site	<p>Useful source of information for those with access to the technology.</p> <p>Care should be taken to ensure websites adhere to Cabinet Office guidelines on accessibility. Details can be found at para. 8.2 above.</p>
DAISY Digital (Digital Accessible Information System)	6-12 weeks dependant on complexity of info being presented	££££ to prepare	<p>Specialised audio disc requiring a special player or PC software, which stores information in easily accessed levels.</p> <p>This enables people with sight-impairment or dyslexia to access audio recordings by going straight to the section they wish to listen to.</p> <p>Ideal for presenting more complex information.</p>

Useful Sources of Advice

Organisations:

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DP. Tel: 028 9050 0600, Fax: 028 9033 1544, Text phone: 028 9050 0589, e-mail: information@equalityni.org, website: www.equalityni.org

Disability:

Aspergers Network: 10 Ashgrove Park, Old Road, Maghaberry, BT67 0QQ, Tel: 028 92611851, E-mail: Sharon.doherty9@btinternet.com

CACDP: Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People, Wilton House, 5 College Square North, Belfast, BT1 6AR, Tel 02890438161 (phone and text), Fax 028 90438161, E-mail: nireland@cacdp.org.uk

Deaf Association Northern Ireland, Suite 3, Cranmore House, 611B Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 7GT. Tel 02890387700, Fax 02890387707, Textphone 028 90387706, E-mail: northernireland@bda.org.uk

Disability Action (Headquarters), Portside Business Park, 189 Airport Road West, Belfast BT3 8ED. Tel 028 9029 7880, Fax 028 9029 7881, Text phone: 028 9029 7882, E-mail hq@disabilityaction.org, Website: www.disabilityaction.org.

Downs Syndrome Association: Graham House, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8BH, Tel: 028 90704606, Fax: 028 90704075

Employers Forum on Disability Northern Ireland (NI), Banbridge Enterprise Centre, Scarva Road Industrial Estate, Banbridge, Co Down BT32 3QD. Tel/Text phone: 028 4062 4526; Fax: 028 4066 2325; E-mail: info@efdni.org.

Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), Enterprise House, 55-59 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8FE, Telephone/Textphone: 028 90 297885 Fax: 028 90 297781 E-mail: info@imtac.org.uk, Website: www.imtac.org.uk

Irish Sign Link Ltd, Interpreting Agency, 25 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Tel: 00353 1 6080437, Text: 00353 1 6080437, Fax: 00353 1 6685029, E-mail: signlink@indigo.ie

LEAD NI coalition on Learning Disability – c/o Paschal McKeown, Mencap, 4 Annadale Ave, Belfast, BT7 3JH, Tel: 02890 691351

Mencap, Segal House, 4 Annadale Avenue, Belfast BT7 3JH. Contact: Paschal McKeown, Tel 028 9069 1351, Fax 028 9064 0121. (Provides information on the needs of adults and children with learning disabilities). E-mail: mencapni@mencap.org.uk, Website: www.mencap.org.uk

Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health, 80 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HE. Contact - Alan Ferguson, Director. Tel: 028 9032 8474, E-mail: anne@niamh.co.uk, Website: www.niamh.co.uk

Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association, 17A Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 3HT Tel: 028 9065 9212. E-mail: help@nida.org.uk Website: www.nida.org.uk

Autism NI (PAPA: Parents and Professionals & Autism), Donard House, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, Tel: 028 90401729, Fax: 028 90403467, E-mail: info@autismni.org, Website: www.autismni.org

RNIB Northern Ireland (NI), Resource Centre, 40 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BA. Tel: 028 9032 9373, Fax: 028 9027 8119; E-mail: rnibni@rnib.org.uk, Website: www.rnib.org.uk . (The Blind Centre NI merged with RNIB in April 2007)

RNIB Helpline: 0845 766 9999

Royal National Institute for Deaf People- NI (RNID), Wilton House, 5 College Square North, Belfast, BT1 6AR. Contact - Cilla Mullen, Communication Services Unit. Tel: 028 9023 9619, Fax: 028 9031 2032, Text phone: 028 9023 9619. E-mail: cilla.mullen@rnid.org.uk, information.nireland@rnid.org.uk, Website: www.rnid.org.uk

RNID Information Line: Tel: 0808 808 0123, Text phone: 0808 808 9000, E-mail: informationline@rnid.org.uk

Sense NI, Manor House, 51 Mallusk Road, Mallusk, Newtownabbey, BT36 4RU. Contact – Collette Gray, Tel: 028 9083 3430, Fax: 028 9084 4232, E-mail: nienquiries@sense.org.uk, Website: www.sense.org.uk

Speechmatters (Stroke Association), Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Belfast, BT8 8BH, Tel: 028 9050 8020 E-mail: info@speechmatters.org Website: www.speechmatters.org

Gender:

The Men's Project, Parents Advice Centre, Floor 4, Franklin House, 12 Brunswick Street, Belfast, BT2 7GE. Contact – Colin Fowler, Tel 028 9031 0891, Fax 028 9031 2475, E-mail: colin@mensproject.org Website: www.mensproject.org (Works to increase awareness of the issues facing men and boys and to promote their social inclusion).

Women's Resource and Development Agency, 6 Mount Charles, Belfast BT7 1NZ. Contact - Margaret Ward, 028 9023 0212, E-mail: info@wrda.net, Website: www.wrda.net

Women's Support Network, 2nd Floor, 109-113 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1FF. Contact – Maire McCotter, Tel: 028 9023 6923, Fax: 028 9031 0307, E-mail: info@womenssupportnetwork.org, Website: www.womenssupportnetwork.org

Sexual Orientation:

The Belfast Butterfly Club PO Box 210, Belfast BT1 1BG. Tel: 028 9027 8636, Fax: 028 90278654, Website: www.belfastbutterflyclub.co.uk

Belfast Lesbian Line, Cathedral Buildings, 64 Donegall Street Belfast BT1 2GT, Tel: 028 90238668 (Thursday 7.30pm – 10.00pm) E-mail: admin@lesbianlinebelfast.org.uk, Website: www.lesbianlinebelfast.org.uk

The Coalition on Sexual Orientation, Cathedral Buildings, 64 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2GT, Tel: 028 9089 0201 Fax: 028 9027 8654, E-mail: admin@coso.org.uk; Website: www.coso.org.uk

Gay and Lesbian Youth in Northern Ireland (GLYNI), Cathedral Buildings, 64 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2GT Tel: 028 90278636 / **07707 216921** Fax: 028 90278654 admin@glyni.org.uk

LGBT Branch of National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland, Ceann Aras na Mac Leinn, Grattan Street, Dublin 2, Telephone: 00 353 1 4353400, www.usi.ie/content/view/73/70/

Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA) Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association, PO Box 44, Belfast BT1 1SH, Tel: 028 9066 5257 Fax: 028 9066 4111 E-mail: nigra@dnet.co.uk

Queer Space Cathedral Buildings, 64 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2GT, Tel: 028 9027 8636, Fax: 028 9027 8654, Website: www.queerspace.org.uk

The Rainbow Project 2-8 Commercial Court, Belfast BT1 2NB, Tel: 028 9031 9030, Fax: 028 9031 9031, E-mail: manager@rainbowproject.org,
[Website: www.rainbow-project.org](http://www.rainbow-project.org)

Press for Change, 4 Glenside Road, Londonderry, BT48 0BW. Contact – Andrea Brown, Tel: 07779 916519; e-mail: andrearobertabrown@eircom.net. www.pfc.org.uk

Age:

Age Sector Platform: Merrion Business Centre, 58 Howard Street, Belfast, BT1 6PJ. Contact Eddie Lynch, Tel: 028 9089 5585, E-mail: eddie.lynch@agesectorplatform.org

Age Concern NI, 3 Lower Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NR. Contact – James Knox, Tel: 028 9024 5729, Fax: 028 9023 5497, Website: www.ageconcernni.org

Help the Aged, Ascot House, Shaftsbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DB. Contact – Seamus Lynch, Tel 028 9023 0666, Fax 028 9024 8183, E-mail: infoni@helptheaged.org.uk

Children’s Law Centre, Phillip House, 123/127 York Street, Belfast BT5 1AB. Contact – Ms Teresa Geraghty, Tel 02890 245704, E-mail: teresa.geraghty@childrenslawcentre.org

The Participation Network: Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI), Unit 9, 40 Montgomery Road, Belfast, BT6 9HL, Tel 028 9040 1290, Fax 028 9070 9418, E-mail: participation@ci-ni.org.uk, Web: www.ci-ni.org

Save The Children, Popper House, 15 Richmond Park, Belfast BT10 0HB. Contact – Dr Paula Rodgers, Tel 028 9043 1123, Fax 028 9043 1343, E-mail p.rodgers@scfuk.org.uk

Youth Council for NI, Forestview, Purdy’s Lane, Belfast BT8 7AR. Contact – Mr David Guilfoyle, Tel 028 9064 3882, Fax 028 9064 3874, E-mail info@youthcouncil-ni.org.uk

Dependants:

Carers National Association NI, 58 Howard Street, Belfast BT1 6PJ. Contact – Helen Ferguson, Tel 028 9043 9843, Fax 028 9032 9299, E-mail info@carersni.org

Gingerbread, 169 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HR. Contact – Marie Cavanagh, Tel: 028 9023 1417, Fax 028 9024 0740, E-mail: enquiries@gingerbreadni.org

Race:

Chinese Welfare Association, 133-135 University Street Belfast, BT7 1HQ Tel: 028 9028 8277 Fax: 028 9028 8278 E-mail: contact@cwa-ni.org

Linguistic Diversity, DCAL, Interpoint Centre, 20-24 York Street, Belfast, BT15 1AQ, Contact – Don Morris, Tel 028 9055 8979, Fax 028 9055 8860, e-mail: translations@dcalni.gov.uk

Multi Cultural Resource Centre Chief Officer Nadette Foley, 9 Lower Crescent Belfast BT7 1NR Tel: 028 9024 4639, Fax: 028 9032 9581, E-mail: info@mcrc-ni.org, Website: www.mcrc-ni.org

NI Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM); Ascot House, 24-31 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DB, Tel 028 9023 8645/9031 9666, Fax 028 9031 9485; e-mail: info@nicem.org.uk Website: www.nicem.org.uk

Publications

Let's make it accessible – Improving Government Information for Disabled People – by Wendy Gregory (COI Communications) February 2001. MISC J006133.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as modified by Schedule 8 for application in Northern Ireland) – NI Disability Council Code of Practice: Rights of Access – Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises. Published by the Stationery Office (1999) ISBN 0-337-08453-X. £12.95. For mail, telephone and fax orders only contact: PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT. General enquiries 020 873 0011; Tel: 020 873 9090; Fax: 020 873 8200

Open for Business: a best practice guide on access by David Bonnett and Patrick Tolfree. Available from Employers' Forum on Disability, Tel/Text phone 020 7403 3020. £13.00 (£10.00 members)

Sign Design Guide, RNIB Customer Services. Tel: 0845 702 3153; e-mail cservices@rnib.org.uk .

“Access First: a guide on how to give written information for people with learning difficulties” by People First.

“Make it Simple: European Easy-to-Read Guidelines”, ILSMH European Association.

“Guidelines to making meetings accessible”, Mencap Communications, available at:
<http://www.mencap.org.uk/document.asp?id=1766> .

“Plain English Guide” by Martin Cutts, Oxford £3.99.

“Am I making myself Clear?” – Mencap Communications March 2000.

“Making Your Information Accessible – Guidelines for Transport Providers” – Imtac guidance on providing services and information to people with disabilities. Copies available at:
www.imtac.org.uk/publications.php?pid=104 .

“Guidelines for Effective Consultation with Older People and Disabled People” – Imtac guidelines on making printed information more accessible. Copies available at:
www.imtac.org.uk/publications.php?pid=120 .

“Eight Easy Steps to Inclusive Marketing” – Imtac checklist on developing information about transport services. Copies available at:
<http://www.imtac.org.uk/publications.php?pid=131>

“A Fair Chance Report” – best practice approach to consultation with people with learning disabilities, copies of report available at:
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publications .

“See it Right”, by RNID, Customer Services, Tel: 0845 702 3153; £30.00 (£22.50 for non-profit organisations).
www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/accessibleinformation/Pages/see_it_right.aspx

Local Talking Newspapers, Association of Talking Newspapers (ATNNI) - contact local libraries.

Sound Vision Ulster magazine by Blind Centre for Northern Ireland, Tel: 028 90 500999, Website: www.bcni.co.uk/communication.html (Blind Centre NI merged with RNIB in April 2007).

Communicating with Deaf or Hard of Hearing People

Sign Language/ Spoken Language Interpreters: The interpreter signs what is spoken simultaneously to communicate what is said.

Lipspeakers: The interpreter repeats clearly what is being said without using sound, using facial expression, natural gesture and fingerspelling (if requested).

Induction loops: Hearing aid wearers often find listening at meetings or in public places very difficult due to the amplification of background noise. Most hearing aids have a “T” position on the on/off switch, which cuts out the integral microphone but enables the user to hear a speaker via a microphone and loop system.

An induction loop is a wire or cable, which encircles the audience area. The cable is fed from a loop amplifier. This, in turn, gets its signal from a microphone placed in front of the person speaking. The Department has a mobile induction loop for use at meetings etc. This loop can be obtained by contacting the Mobility and Inclusion Unit in Clarence Court.

SpeechText operator: is a Windows based text summary service specifically designed to meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people.

Palantype (speech-to-text) operators: speech is transcribed verbatim on a special phonetic keyboard, which then appears on a laptop computer, TV monitor or large screen.

Notetakers: May be used for people who are deaf or hard of hearing who are lipreading and watching a sign language interpreter, and therefore will find it difficult to take notes.

Textphones: textphone is an electronic keyboard that enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing or people with speech impairments to communicate with each other and with hearing people.

SMS Text Messaging: This is a simple and effective way of communicating with deaf or hard of hearing people, using standard mobile telephones.

Textdirect: is the national telephone relay service, which enables a deaf person and hearing people to communicate via the telephone network.

Typetalk: Typetalk is a national telephone relay service that

enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate by using their textphone via specially trained operators with hearing people. It is run by the RNID and funded by BT. For more information Free Phone 0800 73 11 888. The service is completely confidential and has a direct link to the emergency services by dialling 1800.

Television/Video: If you are planning to produce a video, or an item for broadcast you should consider producing it with a sign language insert. You should at the very least incorporate subtitles in any piece of work. Catering for both during planning will reduce costs considerably.

General tips for improving communication

- Consider the requirement for translation, interpretation and transcription services, and/or the requirement for person-to-person communication support;
- Do not make assumptions about the existence or absence of disabilities;
- Change the content and level at which information is pitched to suit the audience;
- If a customer has difficulty understanding – rephrase your message;
- Give your customer time to respond;
- Contact your audience well in advance of an event to establish what arrangements they may require;
- When talking to a wheelchair user place yourself at their eye level;
- Meet with customers who have particular requirements to explain and guide them through materials and organisational layout;
- Low-level counters should be installed in areas with a customer interface;
- Choose a suitable venue without background noise;
- Encourage participants to speak one at a time;
- Ensure that the faces of speakers, translators or sign interpreters can be clearly seen by all;
- You can make it easier for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to lip-read by providing adequate lighting conditions. It is preferable to have light shining onto your face rather than using lighting from behind;
- Do not cover your mouth when talking in case your customer is lip-reading;
- Always speak directly to a deaf person and not the sign language interpreter who may be with them;
- Use plain language and don't use jargon. Always explain any necessary abbreviations;

- Speak clearly and slowly and don't exaggerate your lip movements. Use natural facial expressions and gestures;
- Provision for deaf or hard of hearing customers should be made with the installation of induction loops, infrared systems or sound insulation. Technical advice on this can be provided by RNID;
- Consider locating front-line staff help desks away from noisy areas to assist with privacy for customers, particularly for people who are hard of hearing;
- Do not shout;
- "Within organisations, those taking calls from the public should make greater use of the system of "caller responsibility", where the first person the caller makes contact with becomes responsible for ensuring that the caller's query is answered, regardless of which department or branch within the organisation the query is relevant to"¹;
- Use text phones or Talktype to improve your communication with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Ensure that staff are trained in the use of the textphone;
- Consider training front line staff and at least one other staff member from each unit/ department in British Sign Language or Irish Sign Language; and
- Consider how use of clear, easily visible signs can be used to save time and improve access to services.

Annex H

¹ Barriers to access to essential services, OFMDFM, Dec 2001

² Best Practice Guidance on providing public services to deaf people who use British Sign Language or Irish Sign Language, DCAL, 2005

Providing Accessible information to people who have learning disabilities

A learning disability can affect someone's life in many ways, causing difficulties in learning, communicating or doing everyday things. Some people may have difficulty reading and may have difficulty grasping complicated concepts, with this in mind it is important to ensure that information for those with learning disabilities is carefully designed and targeted.

There are a number of steps that can be taken to make information more accessible:

- **Printed material** – It is important to use plain language in all printed documentation. All text should be kept short and precise with no jargon. Using illustrations, cartoons and pictures can help aid comprehension however care should be taken when using symbols unless you know the people using the material are confident symbol users. You should not try to put too much information in your printed material. If possible, stick to one main point and use repetition to reinforce the message. Mencap can help to produce an approved Easy-Read version of publications
- **Television/Video** – Television and Video do not require the viewer to be able to read. It is therefore a useful means of providing information for people who have a learning disability as they provide visual and audio cues that aid communication.
- **Audio CD** – Audio formats can be a useful form of communication for the same reasons as television and video. Audio CD must be targeted and developed with people with a learning disability in mind. For instance in longer recordings information should be broken up with jingles and sound. Audio cassettes are now seldom used.
- **Websites** – You should ensure that all web pages conform to international standards of accessibility. You can check this by contacting Information Management Unit or the Information Systems Unit who will ensure that all pages meet the latest standards.