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**Equality and Diversity:**

Communication Guidelines

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#

# 1. Introduction

Knowsley Council aims to communicate effectively, coherently and accessibly through all communications. The council follows a range of nationally recommended equality and diversity focussed guidelines such as the Local Government Association and the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). The protected characteristics, as determined by the Equality Act 2010, are age, disability, ethnicity, sex (gender), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, sexual orientation, religion or belief. This ensures that there is no discrimination on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics or on any other unjustifiable grounds.

The council values the diversity of the population of the Borough and aims for activities to be accessible, relevant and meaningful to everyone. We are striving to ensure that sound equal opportunities and diversity principles are embedded in all communications.

These guidelines are not exhaustive, but endeavour to outline what needs to be considered when communicating with the public in order to:

* Promote equal opportunity and diversity in support of the key aims and core values of the council;
* Empower people by providing accessible information;
* Ensure robust equal opportunity and diversity principles are embedded in all communications; and
* Promote a culture which is welcoming to all people.

Information should:

* Be clear, accurate and accessible to all;
* Be available in other formats;
* Value diversity and promote equal opportunities;
* Respect, promote and protect the dignity of disabled people;
* Be fully compliant with legislation and recognised guidance; and
* Take into account requirements of clarity and explanation for people with learning difficulties.

Through communications the council will:

* Make arrangements for people with specific requirements so as not to disadvantage people;
* Write using plain English at all times in order to communicate with the audience effectively;
* Ensure that there is full access to all council services, for example, by households or individuals from black and minority ethnic communities, by monitoring the use of services, and identifying the gaps in service provision;
* Promote opportunities for people to offer feedback on services – through the compliments and complaints process;
* Promote a culture in which there is respect for others, an understanding between different communities and an appreciation of racial and cultural difference; and
* Encouraging and welcoming people into Knowsley through developing an inclusive environment and culture.

This guide will help you to discover how you can communicate accessibly, using correct terms and avoiding any negative connotations. It outlines the steps you will need to take, and covers the areas relevant to communicating effectively and positively.

Language is naturally dynamic, and is constantly evolving and changing, so this guide will be subject to regular review.

# 2. Communications considerations

Knowsley Council communicates in many different ways through various different forms. It is important for the council to make communication clear and effective, by valuing diversity and respecting individual differences. Communication is not simply about words, it is also about body language, tone of voice, and demeanour.

Discrimination, prejudice and exclusive language encourage exclusion and devalue and stereotypes groups or individuals and may suggest insensitivity to individual needs.

When acting on behalf of the council we should try not to offend or upset people by the language we use. This isn’t always going to be possible as sometimes there are conflicting views about what individuals find offensive, and what may be regarded as contemporary and appropriate will need to be reviewed in the future.

The best policy is to be responsive to people’s views and feelings and to be open to changing your own language. If we do cause offence it’s usually completely unintentional and a simple case of just not knowing the right way of expressing something or being a bit out of date with our language.

Negative images about people or groups are often conveyed through humour. While poking fun at a particular group may not be intended, it does little to help promote a positive image and needs to be considered carefully.

It is also important that we try to avoid jargon or bureaucratic language. This is confusing for anyone but can be completely excluding for someone who does not have English as their first language, or those who may be unfamiliar with council terminologies, practice and service delivery processes and as a consequence be excluded from interaction.

The appendix within this guide will help you understand why some terms are not appropriate at work and, where we can, provide a few alternatives. The guide is not intended in any way to be a rule book but a simple tool to help in the same way that you might consult a dictionary or a thesaurus to help you find the right word.

## 2.1 Sex and Language

The Equality Act 2010 makes discrimination on the grounds of sex illegal. The act applies to men and women, but focuses on terminology which excludes or degrades women. It is important for the council to portray positive images of women and men, internally and externally, at all times.

Sometimes the words 'lady', 'woman' or 'female' are used to describe a certain profession, for example lady doctor and woman judge. This also happens with professions such as ‘male nurse’ or ‘male secretary’. These titles should be avoided as they could imply that either male or female workers are the rightful owners to these roles. Simply using the job title is sufficient. If for some reason it is important to identify the gender of the person, following the job title with his or her name will be enough in most cases. It is important to recognise the person’s identified gender.

## 2.2 Devaluing Terminology

Trivialising or degrading expressions are not appropriate, for example adult females should be referred to as women not girls. A reasonable guide for a girl to become a young woman is from the age of 16.

It is common for this terminology to be used, for example 'the girls in the office'; generally no offence will be intended but this should be avoided. Other terms which may cause offence include 'lady', 'love', 'dear' and 'pet'.

## 2.3 Race, Colour, Nationality and Ethnicity and Language

Racial discrimination is the prejudicial treatment towards people on the grounds of race, skin colour, and cultural heritage. Knowsley Council promote a culture which is welcoming to all people from all backgrounds within the community. Language that is used with racial connotations is not acceptable and should be challenged, as its usage can help to reinforce and perpetuate inaccurate racial stereotypes.

##  2.3.1 Ethnicity

Everyone has an ethnic identity based on shared geography, cultural tradition, language or religion. The phrase ‘people of ethnic origin' can suggest that only some groups are 'ethnic', which is untrue. Using the expression 'ethnic' or 'ethnics' to refer to individuals or groups, is unacceptable. The term 'minority ethnic' is a more suitable alternative.

Making assumptions about an individual’s needs on the basis of their ethnic and cultural background may cause problems. If you need to refer to someone’s race or ethnicity, and are uncertain about the terminology to use, simply ask them how they wish to be described.

## 2.4 Religion

Not everyone is religious, but we all have beliefs and values that define our identity. It is important to use correct language when referring to these values and beliefs. It is important to use language appropriate to all groups within the community. For example, to ask a Jewish or Muslim person their Christian name makes no sense, but is also highly disrespectful of their beliefs. Try to use ‘forename’ or ‘first name’ to prevent any misunderstanding and acknowledge their beliefs.

Going to church is specific to Christians. Members of other faith communities have their own places of worship, for example, Jews worship at the synagogue, Muslims at the mosque.

It is important to remember that not all members of the same religious faith behave or practise in the same way. It is important to avoid making assumptions and stereotyping individuals or groups. Some people may describe themselves as Christian on official forms but may not be practising in that community, just as some Jews may not be frequent visitors to the synagogue and some Muslims may not practice at the mosque.

## 2.5 Age and Language

The old and the young often have different values but all have to live as members of the same society. The media sometimes portrays young people as beautiful, glamorous and capable, and others as rebellious, unreliable, dissolute and perhaps even criminal. Older people are sometimes portrayed as helpless, conservative, crotchety, and vulnerable. These stereotypes can affect attitudes and expectations and of both young and old.

As language evolves, so do social formalities. Addressing older people, particularly women, by their forename is not always acceptable and should be avoided. Youth also has connotations of inexperience and unreliability and even dishonesty. Addressing someone as 'boy' or 'girl' or referring to the 'new boy/girl' may cause offence. Again if it is necessary to make reference to a person’s age it is better to use the neutral 'young people' rather than terms such as child, kid, etc.

## 2.6 Disability

Everyone has different needs; some people with disabilities may need information delivered in a different format. Each person is unique and should be asked how they would like to receive information for instance not all visually impaired people use Braille, some people prefer audio descriptions. There are lots of different terms to describe different disabilities the appendix details some appropriate terms to use which are currently viewed as acceptable. However, what should always be evident is to demonstrate a positive and respectful approach.

## 2.6.1 Communicating with people with disabilities

The language and terminology generally used for people with disabilities creates negative messages. The rights of disabled people must be respected, and the language used should reflect this. It is important to treat each person individually, and take care when making assumptions about their abilities. The council recognises that people are disabled by society and not their impairment.

Depending on an individual’s disability, when communicating it is important to:

* Use a large print;
* Use colour, but be aware that some colours and backgrounds such as black text on blue may be difficult for people with visual impairments;
* Use more pictures and less words;
* Offer audio tape;
* Ensure your messages are clear and concise;
* Avoid abbreviations;
* Be prepared to signpost to translation services;
* Check that people with hearing impairments are happy to receive written communications. Some may have additional difficulties with print reading and may require the services of a signer.
* Address the person with the disability direct rather than the carer
* Recognise that a person’s wheelchair is part of their personal space

# 2.7 Translation and Interpretation

Sometimes the council may need to offer a translation or interpretation service to clients. Translators work with written material and interpreters with the spoken word. Both of these specialist services should be knowledgeable and provide the customer with the same information in their chosen format. Contact the Community Cohesion Manager if you need more information.

## 2.7.1 Commissioning a translation

Before you plan an interpretation you need to ensure that:

* Language is written in plain text;
* Sentences should be short but complete and logical;
* Text should be informal and easy to read;
* You advise the translator who the target audience is;
* Ensure the translator is fully conversant and able to deal with the target group; and/or

It may not always be necessary for a whole document to be translated; it may just need certain parts to be made accessible. Check this before you seek a translator to assist.

## 2.7.2 Commissioning a British Sign Language Interpreter

If you are holding an event you may need to employ a British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreter. British sign language (BSL) interpreters help deaf and hearing people to communicate with one another. They do this by interpreting spoken English into BSL. A BSL interpreter needs to be a least a level 3 for an event and a level 4 if it is a personal appointment such as a meeting with social worker.

When holding an event or meeting, if it is any longer than an hour your will need two interpreters to keep swapping as the role is very intense.

# 3. Traditional Communication

It is the council’s duty to provide information in alternative formats upon request. There are many reasons why people may need text in alternative formats: people who have sensory impairments or learning disabilities, or those with literacy problems such as dyslexia.

Making information accessible is often cheaper and easier than you think. If you want to discuss the options please call Communications on 0151 443 3068.

## 3.1 Accessibility statement

All council produced information should display the accessibility statement. For big projects where large amounts of space are available, for example, brochures, newsletters and booklets, the following should be used:

You can also get this information in other formats. Please phone Customer Services on 0151 443 4031, or email customerservices@knowsley.gov.uk

For smaller projects where limited space is available, for example posters, flyers and cards, the following should be used:

You can also get this information in other formats. Please phone Customer Services on 0151 443 4031

## 3.2 Type size

The standard typeface is between 12 to 14 point; however this may not always be possible if there is limited space on publications or extensive information that needs to be included. This is why, wherever possible, the accessibility statement should be included on all material.

## 3.3 Plain English

Knowsley Council’s House Style follows Plain English Campaign guidelines. Plain English involves the use of straight forward language, short sentences and no jargon. The Plain English campaign defines plain English as ‘something that the intended audience can read, understand and act upon the first time they read it.’ Council staff should be writing in plain English at all times; this will not only benefit the wider population of the Borough, but information will be clearer when communicating with a blind or partially sighted person with a learning or literacy difficulty. Plain and simple language that is easy to understand can really help, and messages can be put across more effectively.

## 3.4 Braille

Braille is used by people with visual impairments who cannot read the written word. Braille is a writing system of raised dots which enables blind and partially sighted people to read by touch.

If you need a Braille translation your team can commission a transcription agency to modify your literature into a Braille document.

## 3.5 Audio

Spoken word audio on CD has the benefit that everyone is able to use it except those with very poor hearing. It is also ideal for people with learning difficulties, low literacy levels, or those who may have problems with their hands. Once you have chosen to produce spoken word audio on CD, you will need to decide whether to do it yourself, or to use a transcription agency.

Bradbury Fields translates information into Braille and audio.

Bradbury Fields

Muriel Crooke House

Youens Way

Liverpool

L14 2EW

Tel: 0151 221 0888 email:info@bradburyfields.org.uk

## 3.5 Moon

Moon is a system made up of lines and curves which is similar to Braille. Moon uses some ordinary letters in simplified form; others consist of straight and hooked lines, angles and half-circles. The alphabet consists of only nine characters, their meaning depending on which way they are used.

##

## 3.6 Large print

For many blind and partially sighted people, larger print is essential. No single size is suitable for everyone, but most people prefer their large print in the range of 16 to 22 point. If possible, for example with personal communication, always ask your customer which size suits best.

## 3.7 Photography

All photographs must be representative of the people or situation being portrayed. Photographs should reflect the diversity of the subject; there is no need to use token images if they aren’t a true representation. The Council’s Community Cohesion Manager is available to discuss representation and other issues relating to the use of photographs.

## 3.8 Forms

When creating a form, ensure extra space is available for people who have large handwriting and cannot fit all the information on. This will benefit those with conditions relating to their hands, such as arthritis.

## 3.9 Contrast

The better the contrast between the background and the text, the more legible the text will be. Note that the contrast will be affected by the size and weight of the type. Black text on off white background provides best contrast. Black text on a pure white background can appear as a blur to people with dyslexia.

## 3.10 Typeface

Avoid simulated handwriting and ornate typefaces as these can be difficult to read. Arial, Universe and New Century Schoolbook are standard accepted fonts to use, and good examples of clear and legible typefaces.

## 3.11 Type styles

Capital letters and italicised text are both generally harder to read. A word or two in capitals is fine but avoid the use of capitals for continuous text. Italic text should not be used where an alternative emphasis is available.

## 3.12 Leading

The space between one line of type and the next (known as leading) is important. As a general rule, the space should be 1.5 to 2 times the space between words on a line.

## 3.13 Type weight

People with sight problems often prefer bold or semi-bold weights to normal ones. Avoid light type weights.

## 3.14 Numbers

If you print documents with numbers in them, choose a typeface in which the numbers are clear. Readers with sight problems can easily misread 3, 5, 8 and 0. Write numbers one-ten out in full and use digits for numbers after 11.

## 3.15 Line length

Ideally, line length should be between 60-70 letters per line. Lines that are too long or too short tire the eyes. The same applies to sentence and paragraph lengths, which should also be neither too long nor too short.

## 3.16 Word spacing and alignment

Keep to the same amount of space between each word. Do not condense or stretch lines of type. Aligning text to the left margin is recommended as it is easy to find the start and finish of each line and keeps the spaces even between words. Avoid justified text as the uneven word spacing can make reading more difficult for people with sight problems and dyslexia.

## 3.17 Columns

Make sure the margin between columns clearly separates them. If space is limited, use a vertical rule.

## 3.18 Reversing type

If using white type, make sure the background colour is dark enough to provide sufficient contrast.

## 3.19 Setting text

Avoid fitting text around images if this means that lines of text start in a different place, and are therefore difficult to find. Set text horizontally as text set vertically is extremely difficult for a partially sighted reader to follow. Avoid setting text over images, for example photographs. This will affect the contrast and, if a partially sighted person is avoiding images, they will miss the text.

## 3.20 Navigational aids

It is helpful if recurring features, such as headings and page numbers, are always in the same place. A contents list and rules to separate different sections are also useful. Leave a space between paragraphs as dividing the text up gives the eye a break and makes reading easier.

## 3.21 Printing

Avoid glossy paper because glare makes it difficult to read. Choose uncoated paper that weighs over 90 GSM. As a general rule, if the text is showing through from the reverse side, then the paper is too thin.

## 3.22 Format

When folding paper, avoid creases which obscure the text. People who use screen magnifiers need to place the document flat under the magnifier, so try not to use a binding method that may make it difficult to flatten the document.

## 3.23 Accessible events

It is important to make your meetings and public events as accessible and inclusive as possible. Every time you plan an event is important to think about the venue and everyone who is attending. You will need to do some research before your event to find out if any attendees have any specific needs. Always ensure you have enough time to meet any individual requests that may arise, for example someone may request a signer, so you will need to book one in advance.

Access for disabled people is not only about the physical aspects such as ramps for wheelchair users, but also includes written information for people with visual impairments etc.

The Equality Act 2010 states that we should:

* Ensure we are not treating disabled people less favourably than non-disabled people;
* Make reasonable adjustments to services and premises so that disabled people can access them; and
* Promote equality of opportunity, including translation and interpreting services for people who have little or no English.

Before any event you should decide what the purpose is, who your target audience will be, and what alternate forms of communications you could use to get your message across. You may want to consider:

* Using video conferencing, telephone conferencing or email;
* Preparing any additional material in accessible formats, for example on computer disk, large font and on audiotape;
* The time, date and occasion of your event, avoiding religious celebrations and school holidays;
* Your budget and costs of hiring a venue, catering, speakers’ expenses and materials; and
* Feedback and evaluation options.

You should remember to:

* Give all delegates the contact details of the venue, including telephone number, minicoms/text phone number if possible;
* Check if the venue has accessible toilets;
* Provide printed material/copies of slides to help people that have difficulties taking their own notes;
* Brief any speakers on the needs of the audience. For example, going at a pace suitable for any interpreters and explaining any visual aids for the benefit of people with visual impairments in the audience;
* Arrange tables and chairs so that people using wheelchairs and guide dogs can move around easily; and
* Seat deaf or hard of hearing people in front of the speaker/interpreter.

Appendix 2 provides a checklist of what to consider when investigating if a venue is accessible.

**Communications can advertise your event and arrange everything from displays to giveaways. Call 443 3068 for more details.**

## 3.24 Presentations

* Check all paperwork for presentations is available in accessible formats prior to the meeting or event;
* The use of overhead projectors, flow charts and graphics should be avoided. If one is used, the print should be large and well spaced enough to be clearly visible, with few lines;
* Any interpreters should have copies of any presentation material at least one week before the event. They should also have a copy of any verbal presentation, particularly if technical or specialist language will be used;
* Avoid using coloured presentational backgrounds. Where colour is used, choose contrasting print on clear backgrounds;
* Speakers should avoid using abbreviations, jargon, technical or specialist terms during their presentations, and if they do need to be used they should be clearly explained;
* At least one roving microphone with assistance should be available to allow questions or comments to speakers or presenters from the participants.

# 4. Digital Communications

## 4.1 Email

When writing and sending emails, it is important to make them accessible by following the guidelines below:

* Use a plain font - for example Verdana or Arial;
* Use a reasonable font size - no smaller than 12 point;
* Use a white background and black text – avoid fancy colours, backgrounds and borders;
* Do not use red text on a green background or yellow text on a blue background;
* Avoid patterned backgrounds for text;
* Links to web pages or other documents should be on a separate line and in their own colour (blue is the default);
* Avoid the use of graphics if possible;
* Pale colours and colours which are close in tone should be avoided;
* It is easier to read text in upper and lower case than all capital letters;
* Don’t use *italics* and avoid underlining since it makes the text harder to read; and
* Left justified text should be used as it is easier to read.

## 4.2 Internet

The World Wide Web offers exciting possibilities for accessing large quantities of information but there are problems. Blind users need a suitable browser. The main problem is that many websites use graphics which are not accessible when accessed by a text-based browser (e.g. with speech or Braille output). Guidelines have been produced for how to design accessible websites.

It's important to design your website so it's flexible. Customers should be able to adjust text and colour settings in their browser to suit their individual needs. Other customers will browse your website using "text to speech" software. Careful design is paramount for people accessing the web using speech access because inappropriate use of HTML can make a website unreadable.

For a full explanation of accessible web design visit the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) published by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), which is part of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). RNIB is a contributing member.

RNIB offers a commercial consultancy service on website accessibility, including website audits, presentations and seminars. For more information visit RNIB's [Web Access Centre](http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/code/public_rnib008789.hcsp%22%20%5Ct%20%22_top).

## 4.3 Computer keypads

Enlarged keys on a keyboard are available for people with visual impairments and for people with learning difficulties. The large contrasting letters are much bigger than a standard keyboard, allowing people to use PCs.

A standard layout for keypads is essential for blind people. There are currently two common layouts for numeric keys; the telephone layout and the calculator layout. It is recommended that the telephone layout be used exclusively on [public access terminals](http://www.tiresias.org/guidelines/pats.htm).

## 4.4 Touch screens

As touch screens become more common it is essential that they are designed for ease of use by everyone, including disabled and elderly people.

To use a touch screen from a user-propelled wheelchair, the height of the active areas should be between 800mm and 1200mm for most users. Also, the screen should be perpendicular to the line of sight. If the terminal is also to be used comfortably by standing users, this may involve using two screens or a variable height screen.

## 4.5 Telephony

## 4.5.1 Visual ringing signal

For people who are deaf or have a severe hearing impairment it is essential that they can see some form of visual signal for incoming calls. A visual ringing signal unit will indicate when the telephone is ringing using lights or a vibration.

## 4.5.2 Wireless systems

Bluetooth is an example of a short-range wireless technology that can link appliances and devices together, so that control and communication can be managed remotely. It offers a number of very interesting and important applications for people with disabilities. Small devices like mobile phones, hearing aids, pocket calculators etc. could be controlled from a separate keypad, appropriate to the user’s needs, connected via a Bluetooth link.

## 4.5.3 Video telephony

For deaf users, a video phone could transmit sign language with a modest picture quality, but greater bandwidth is needed for lip reading.

## 4.5.4 Relay systems

Relay systems use an operator to help text phone users to communicate with people using ordinary voice phones. Where a call is being made between people using an ordinary voice phone and a text phone, an operator will automatically join the call and translate what is being said.

## 4.5.5 Interactive voice response

Interactive voice response units can give particular problems for deaf users and those with a cognitive impairment. Using a one-piece phone, where the keypad is integral with the headset, makes it difficult for the user to simultaneously listen and press keys. Therefore, adequate time needs to be given for the user to respond.

## 4.5.6 Text phones (minicoms)

Text phones (minicoms) allow deaf people or those with other impairments to communicate. A text phone is simply a telephone with a keyboard attached and messages appear as text in a display. The conversation is typed, rather than spoken.

If you are an externally facing service you should consider providing a text phone number. This facility encourages greater levels of communication with customers who may be unable to access services.

As with normal telephone conversations, there are certain rules which make the difference between a good and bad telephone manner. Such as:

* There must be a dedicated telephone number for the text phone so calls do not get put through to a switchboard or passed around different people to reach the text phone.
* As with verbal telephone calls, it is important to introduce yourself and tell the caller who they have reached, asking how you can help.

If dealing with a text phone call as with a verbal telephone call – ensure you don’t leave the person on the other end of the phone not knowing what is happening. Offer to take a message or call back.

Designated staff should be trained in the effective use of text phones, how to give a good service and to be aware of text abbreviations and written forms of British Sign Language.

Free phone telephone numbers should include text phone free phone numbers and should not be left on answer phone mode. Text phone numbers should be advertised in information centres and phone books.

## 4.5.7 Type Talk

Type Talk is a service which allows deaf, deaf blind, deafened, hard of hearing and speech impaired people to communicate through a text phone. The service is run by the Royal National Institute for Deaf People and funded by British Telecom.

Type Talk provides a link between the text phone user and the hearing person. The link is a highly trained RNID Type Talk Operator who understands the needs of deaf and speech-impaired people and provides a discreet and confidential service.

Text phone users dial direct using the 18001 prefix before the number of the person they would like to speak to and RNID Type Talk Operator joins the line to relay the conversation.

For more details please visit <http://www.typetalk.org/frame.html>

## 4.6 Social Media

The council’s presence on social media is managed by the Communications Team and follows the guidelines’ set out in this document. A separate [Social Media Protocol](http://bertha.knowsley.gov.uk/Corporate_Information/Policy/Lists/All%20Policies/DispForm.aspx?ID=128&Source=http%3A%2F%2Fbertha%2Eknowsley%2Egov%2Euk%2FCorporate%5FInformation%2FPolicy%2FLists%2FAll%2520Policies%2FAZ%2Easpx) is also available.

# Summary

Knowsley’s Vision is “Improving people’s lives”. This includes valuing diversity and respecting others. Our equality and diversity agenda is therefore not just about responding to targets set by legislation or reaching performance objectives, it is about how we behave towards each other every day of our lives. We aim to make sure that everyone is confident of being able to access our services, seek employment and take an active part within the communities of the Borough without the fear of prejudice or discrimination.

These guidelines will help you to understand equality and diversity considerations when communicating with the public and also identify acceptable terminology that promotes best practice. The information contained in these guidelines should help to improve relationships across the council.

The appendix within these guidelines contains a list of considerations covering disability, gender, race, other groups, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. You will find this useful as a guide, however, in everyday life you will experience a range of different situations in which some of these terms may not apply. The guidelines should therefore be used at your own discretion, depending on how individuals would prefer to be addressed under specific circumstances.

Communications can advise you further on equality and diversity issues in terms of communication and direct you to services that will cater for your specific requests. The team hold a database of companies that will provide accessible services and is happy to discuss costs and how these services will build into your budget.

**Contacts:**

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# Appendix 1

## Choosing the right words

## A. Disability

| Positive language to use:  |
| --- |
| **Disabled person**The British Council of Disabled People’s Organisation use the term Disabled People. This is reflected in the contemporary Social Model of Disability which is founded on the recognition that people are disabled more by society than their disability.**People with disabilities** This term has been considered positive as it emphasises the **people** aspect and is widely used in America. It is unlikely to cause offence but has been rejected by the UK Disabled People’s Movement.The disabled label dehumanises and implies a group of people all with the same disability or experience. Instead use positive language such as:* Accessible toilet rather than disabled toilet
* Ask: Do you have any access requirements?
 |
| **Deaf people**The RNID use three terms:**A person who is deaf** (this can mean profound deafness but may also be used by someone with a less severe hearing loss). **A person who is deafened** (to describe someone who has lost their hearing as an adult, used where there is a severe or total loss).**A person who is hard of hearing** (can mean anything from mild to severe loss). **Blind People – person with a visual impairment**The RNIB use the above term as a general term which includes blind people and those who have some sight. |
| **Wheelchair user** A wheelchair, like a car or bicycle is simply a way of getting around. The person has an identity quite separate from their means of transport. |
| Instead of saying the special needs of disabled people require additional access routes into the building, it should be said that the current access routes are not accessible to disabled people.  |
| It is not always relevant to talk about someone’s disability. If it is necessary to refer to a person’s disability then use neutral phrases such as:‘John Smith had polio’ ‘Elaine Jones has epilepsy’ not “Elaine is epileptic”‘A person with spina bifida’'‘A person with epilepsy' or 'people who have diabetes' |
| Instead of “Jane is learning disabled” try “Jane has a learning difficulty”Some people confuse learning difficulty with mental illness which can affect anyone irrespective of ability. Mental illness can take many forms and there are several terms which might be used, such as referring to someone as having a 'psychological', 'emotional' or 'behavioural difficulty'.People can suffer stigma from their experience of emotional and mental health. Instead of saying “people with mental health problems” say “People who use mental health services or people who experience emotional/mental distress.”  |
|  |

## B. Gender

| Positive language to use: |
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| **Woman/women** The Equality Act 2010 makes discrimination on the grounds of sex illegal. The act applies to men and women but focuses on terminology which excludes or degrades women. Trivialising or degrading expressions are not appropriate, for example adult females should be referred to as women not girls. A reasonable guide for a girl to become a young woman is from the age of 16. It is best to use non-gender specific terms. For example:* The general public or Knowsley residents;
* Staffing the switchboard (instead of “manning the phones”.)

It is important to ensure that language that the council uses is not gender specific. When referring to no-one in particular, 'he or she' and 'his or her' should be used. It is possible in most cases to rephrase the sentence to avoid using a gender at all. For example 'he' or 'she' can be avoided by using the plural 'they’. Avoid using he and his, for example: A city council manager is responsible for the safety of his staff.You can try using s/he, his/hers and him/her although this can be cumbersome. A useful alternative is to use the plural for example: A city council manager is responsible for the safety of their staff.Sometimes the words ‘lady’ ‘woman’ or ‘female’ are used to describe a certain profession, for example lady doctor and woman judge. This also happens with professions such as ‘male nurse’ or ‘male secretary’. These titles should be avoided as they could imply that either male or female workers are the rightful owners to these roles. Simply using the job title is sufficient. If for some reason it is important to identify the gender of the person, following the job title with his or her name will be enough in most cases. |
|  |
| The use of Ms has become a preference for women as they cannot be discriminated by their marital status. Women, unlike men, are designated by their titles as married or single. However, where a woman has made it clear that she wishes to be addressed as Mrs, Ms or Miss then this preference should be respected. If you are in doubt prior to writing to a member of the public and you have the opportunity for clarification, it is perfectly acceptable to ask the individual which title they prefer you to use in correspondence.It is important to recognise the person’s identified gender.**Lone parents or single parents.** This is an assumption that all people caring for children on their own are women. It is quite true that the majority are women but there are also fathers who carry out this role alone. |
|  |

## C. Race

| Positive language to use: |
| --- |
| The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) recommends using:**“People from ethnic minorities or people from minority ethnic groups.”**The idea of the ethnic minority communityis a bit of a myth which can lead to misunderstandings. There may be some cultural similarities between minority ethnic groups but there will also be differences and it is important not to generalise.  |
| **Dual heritage, dual ethnic background or multi-ethnic background** is generally acceptable. Refer to the specific racial group if known or: People from minority ethnic backgrounds. |
|  |
| It should also be noted that many of those from the Indian sub continent such as Pakistani, Bengali or Indian people do not refer to themselves as Black. If in doubt ask the individual for their preference.Be aware that this term is not acceptable to all people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Although there are a number of people who prefer to be referred to as Black rather than some of the more contemporary terms.  |
| **Asian - t**he terms 'Asian' or 'British Asian' are generally acceptable. There may be some circumstances where it is not acceptable to make broad references to groups, or to identify people together as Asian, i.e. People of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. In some cases, for example, 'South East Asian'may be a more appropriate term to describe Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese people, all of whom may prefer to be identified separately. |
| **'African-Caribbean'** may be used, but only when referring to specific geographical origins. Otherwise, 'Black' is a more appropriate term to use. The term 'West Indian' was used to describe first generation settlers from the Caribbean. The historical term is still used in some circumstances (for example, the West Indian Cricket Team) however in most contexts this it is inappropriate and may be found offensive. Black people are referred to as both 'Afro-Caribbean' and 'African-Caribbean' in official documentation. However those born in Britain may find these terms offensive. 'Afro-Caribbean' is generally now deemed to be unacceptable even though it continues to be used.  |

## D. Other groups

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| Positive language to use: |
| **Gypsies and Travellers** Romany Gypsies and Irish travellers, who have been travelling in England as a distinct social group, are each recognised in law as separate racial groups. |

## E. Age

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| Positive language to use: |
| Age Concern and Age UK recommends use of the term older person; or you could try using those of pension age. Try to use neutral terms such as elderly or older for example: services for elderly people, older workers. Some other terms to use when referring to people are: * Services for older people
* Elderly relatives
* Elders (this term is often used amongst BME communities)

It is important not to make assumptions about the value of people based on their age.  |

## F. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

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| Positive language to use: |
| **Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)**Note: people who are bisexual are not covered by the terms **gay** or **lesbian.** The term **gay** can be taken to refer to both men and women although it is more commonly used to describe men more than women. Women tend to self identify as either gay woman or lesbian. Avoid stereotyping, making assumptions, and using language which may offend or have negative connotations.Heterosexual people rarely introduce themselves as such in a conversation; similarly, LGBT people rarely announce their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender reassignment status in open conversation. Always interact with the person, not with a label representing their equality and diversity strands.**Transgendered person** A transgendered or transsexual person experiences 'gender dysphoria.' This means that the gender they were assigned at birth is wrong for them. Transgendered people are identified by law and have the right to live as a member of society.Although people who have made the decision to transition ‘in general’ may describe themselves as a male or a female, some may identify themselves in a different gender or as having no gender at all. Not all transgender people actually choose to identify themselves as such in day-to-day existence and may for instance wish to be merely identified as a man or a woman. They do not see their gender reassignment status as being a key part of who they are as a person. The important point is to refer to the person, wherever you can, using language which that person wishes you to use.If, for example, a person was assigned the female gender at birth, but personally identifies as male, then he must be treated and referred to as a man. There may be a transitional period in between, which may involve hormonal and or surgical treatment. A transgendered person who does not have hormone therapy or surgery is still fully protected in their new gender under the Equality Act 2010. |

##  G. Religion

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| --- |
| Positive language to use: |
| **Forename or first name** Ask people for their first name or forename. This should prevent any misunderstanding and also acknowledge people’s beliefs. To ask a Jewish or Muslim person their “Christian name” is assuming that everyone is Christian.Be aware that not everyone celebrates the major Christian holidays. If you are producing a document that wishes people a “Merry Christmas” consider also acknowledging other religions that celebrate festivals at the same time such as “Happy Hanukah” (Jewish) or “Eid Mubarak” (Islam).  |

# Appendix 2 - Public Areas of Buildings Accessibility Checklist

This checklist will help you to evaluate the accessibility of a venue’s public areas, but it is not to be considered a full investigation of accessibility. It will help you decide if a particular environment is suitable. This assessment tool is best used alongside the British Standard (BS) Approved Part M and BS 8300 of the building regulations for more detailed analysis.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Access Issue** | **Yes** | **No** | **Measurement if appropriate** | **Comments** |
| 1. **Is there accessible public transport to the venue?**
 |  |  |  |  |
| a) Low floor bus route |  |  |  |  |
| b) Taxi drop off point |  |  |  |  |
| c) Metro link |  |  |  |  |
| d) Train station close by |  |  |  |  |
| **2. Are the pavements leading to the venue in good condition with dropped kerbs?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Bluster warning texture on dropped kerb |  |  |  |  |
| b) Good accessible road crossings with warning texture and crossing systems |  |  |  |  |
| **3. Is there accessible parking near the main entrance or the entrance which disabled people will use?**  |  |  |  |  |
| a) Is it 50 meters uncovered or 100 meters covered to the accessible entrance? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Is there lighting leading from the accessible parking to the accessible entrance? |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Access Issue** | **Yes** | **No** | **Measurement if appropriate** | **Comments** |
| **4. Is the entrance easy to recognise, which can be defined by a unique physical feature or colour contrast?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) If dark outside is there appropriate lighting? |  |  |  |  |
| **5. Is there an intercom system or security system for entry to the building?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Is it at accessible heights to accommodate both wheelchair users, located at 800mm – 1200mm and for taller people nearer 1400mm? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Is there a sign instructing deaf people or people with hearing or speech difficulties on how they can contact reception?i.e. push buzzer three times |  |  |  |  |
| **6. Is the entrance accessible?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) If there is a ramp, does it have a levelled area at the top, 1200mm square or larger? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Will the door/s be unlocked? |  |  |  |  |
| c) If the doors are closed, can they easily be opened unaided by a person in a wheelchair? i.e. light weight door, try opening it with one finger, low door handle… |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Access Issue** | **Yes** | **No** | **Measurement if appropriate** | **Comments** |
| 6. Entrance continued… |  |  |  |  |
| d) Is there a level door threshold less than 10mm and a door width clear opening at least 800mm non-obstructed? i.e. the door handle can be an obstruction to the clear opening  |  |  |  |  |
| e) Are steps and floor level changes clearly marked with a bright contrast edging? |  |  |  |  |
| **7. Is there an entrance lobby where a wheelchair user can move clear of one door before using the next one?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Does the lobby door(s) have a clear opening of at least 800mm? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Is there a trip hazard? i.e. created by a mat well |  |  |  |  |
| c) Is there a visual panel between 900mm – 1500mm so you can see someone approach from the other side? |  |  |  |  |
| **8. Is there a reception area?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Is there a low area at 800mm for someone who may not be able to see over the counter?  |  |  |  |  |
| b) Is there a higher area for tall people who might find it difficult to bend for signing things? |  |  |  |  |
| c) Is there a minicom? |  |  |  |  |
| d) Is there a fax? |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Access Issue** | **Yes** | **No** | **Measurement if appropriate** | **Comments** |
| **9. Are the floor surfaces non-slip?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Does the floor surface create a glare? |  |  |  |  |
| **10. If there is seating do some seats have armrests?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Is the seating fixed to the floor? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Is the seating set out in rows and if so can you get a walking frame down the rows? |  |  |  |  |
| c) Is there a clear space for wheelchair users to be seated where they are not in the way of traffic flow? |  |  |  |  |
| **11. Is there clear access to the meeting room?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Doors 800mm width |  |  |  |  |
| b) Corridor at least 1200mm |  |  |  |  |
| c) No obstacles in the way. i.e. rubbish bin, etc… |  |  |  |  |
| d) Can doors be wedged open in a way that does not restrict the pathway? |  |  |  |  |
| **12. Is there colour contrasting in the building so that doors and fixtures are easy to distinguish?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Does the furniture contrast with surroundings so that people don’t bump it? |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Access Issue** | **Yes** | **No** | **Measurement if appropriate** | **Comments** |
| **13. Is there an accessible toilet at least 1500mm x 2000mm?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Door width at least 900mm? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Is the door handle near 800mm from floor and have a lock that can be flipped or slid to lock?i.e. NO twisting locks  |  |  |  |  |
| c) Is it kept clear of storage equipment? |  |  |  |  |
| d) Is it easily accessible from the meeting room? |  |  |  |  |
| e) Is the sink near the toilet, so it can be reached while on the toilet, but not located in the transfer space? |  |  |  |  |
| **14. Do the average toilets have door handles no higher then 1100mm?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Are the cubical door handles near 800mm from floor and have a lock that can be flipped or slid?i.e. NO twisting locks |  |  |  |  |
| b) Do the toilets and sinks contrast with surroundings so they can be easily identified? |  |  |  |  |
| **15. Is the meeting room on the ground floor?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) if not is there a lift 1100mm x 1400mm? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Are the buttons in the lift at a height that a wheelchair user could reach, 900mm-1200mm? |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Access Issue** | **Yes** | **No** | **Measurement if appropriate** | **Comments** |
| **16. Do you have equipment to assist with hearing?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Do you have a working induction loop available to users of the meeting room? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Do you have amplifiers and microphones available to hirers of the meeting room? |  |  |  |  |
| c) Does any wiring for these systems impede access to the seating? |  |  |  |  |
| d) Are there power points available to plug in equipment? |  |  |  |  |
| **17. Is there clear signage?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Is only the first letter of each word capitalized? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Is the font simple or plain, such as Arial or Helvetica? |  |  |  |  |
| c) Is there colour contrasting, such as black and white or yellow and dark blue? |  |  |  |  |
| **18. Is there an outdoor area for a Service or Guide dog to “relieve” itself?** |  |  |  |  |
| **19. Is there a public phone?** |  |  |  |  |
| a) Is there a low phone for wheelchair users? |  |  |  |  |
| b) Is there a minicom for Deaf people? |  |  |  |  |