

Let's Make it Accessible: a guide to other formats

Questions to ask yourself

Questions to take into account when planning your information strategy should include:

- Who is the target audience?
- Which media will be most effective in providing the information?
- What is the subject matter and how much of it is there?
- Are your decisions likely to be viewed as reasonable?
- What resources do you have?

Paper Formats

Braille: budget version

- Systems need to be in place to ensure final text is available electronically in a plain text format.
- Only suitable for one-offs or short print runs, for example conference, exhibition programme, papers for meetings.
- Can be produced in-house if a braille user is available to proof-read the document.

Braille: published quality

- Systems need to be in place to ensure final text is available electronically in a plain text format.
- Use for longer print runs if you know there will be a demand but there may be acceptable alternatives – see electronic formats.
- Supplied by professional brailing company.

***Easy read** For people with learning disabilities

Can also be useful for other audiences, people with literacy difficulties, including deaf, hard of hearing, dyslexia, English as second language.

Some simple guidelines:

- Use simple, direct but non-patronising text.

- Use images, e.g. photographs/pictures/drawings to support text.
- Place these to left of the text to re-enforce left to right reading order.
- Give all images an alternative title to ensure accessibility of electronic versions.
- Ask learning disability organisations, user-led groups for advice, or commission them to produce easy-read versions.
- Pilot document with users to ensure that the appropriateness of the text, images and layout.

***Large print** in-house

- Systems need to be in place to ensure an accurate copy of the final text is available electronically.
- Useful for requests, e.g. a specific point size.
- Do not produce using enlarging facilities on a photocopier or on A3 paper.
- Small quantities can be produced in advance, e.g. a conference/exhibition programme.
- Single copies produced as required, e.g. papers for meetings.

Large print – published

- Alternative action - produce all printed documents 14 or larger point. This might slightly increase overall costs but would make document accessible to many more people and establish good practice.

Audio-Visual Formats

Audio cassette: professional

- May still be relevant if you know you have customers who do not have access to a computer or CD Player.
- Where possible, professional scripting and voices are preferable, as low quality recordings are not easy to listen to.

Audio cassette: in-house

- Only suitable for one-offs or short runs, for example conference/exhibition programme

***British Sign Language DVD**

- Different from BSL added to visual DVD as aimed directly at people whose first language is BSL.
- Likely to be text-based, that is, an alternative to printed information.
- Should also include subtitles and clear, simple voice-over.

***CD Rom -Audio**

- Holds more information than Audio-cassette and sound quality is better.
- If played on a computer can include images.
- Can support easy-read documents as user can listen and read document at same time.

***DVD – Professional**

Very good for various groups, for example, learning disability, literacy difficulties and English as 2nd language.

Recommended additions:

- English subtitles
- British Sign Language interpretation
- Subtitles in other languages where relevant

***DVD - in-house**

- Can be disappointing and a lot more work than first envisaged.
- Unlikely to produce professional results.

Electronic Formats

Electronic documents are the preferred format for many people. However not everyone has access to a computer so that the formats discussed above are still relevant. Those marked with an asterisk can also be accessed on the Internet.

All documents being made available electronically should be properly structured using styles, tags and properties to ensure their accessibility to users of assistive technology. Staff may need training on how to do this.

Email

Quick way of distributing documents as attachments. Good practice guidelines in sending emails should be observed. Staff may need training.

Flash Drive/ CD Rom - text files

Provide a menu of what is on the disk, the formats used and advice on how to access the documents.

Flash Drive – Application Software

Flash drive can be used on public computer. Useful for giving people access to free versions of Assistive Technology.

Social Networks, Podcasts, Blogs

There are still some access issues for these newer types of information dissemination. However, this is improving all the time.

Texting

- Particularly when working with young people.
- Some mobiles have speech reading facilities for Visually Impaired Users.

Websites

Websites should

- meet Worldwide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative (W3C WAI) Guidelines for Accessibility.
- be flexible structure so that users can alter their look to suit their needs.
- Web Designers may need training.

All documents made available via a website should be

- accessible, and offer information in a range of formats, for example
 - Word
 - PDF
 - HTML