

Accessible Information Policy and Guidance

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Deputy Leader Councillor G Clements
Councillor N Williams

LEAD OFFICER: Jane Salt, Head of Customer Services

REPORT AUTHOR: Jane Salt, Head of Customer Services

<p>Summary and Recommendation: To approve the Accessible Information Policy and Guidance</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The policy has been written to give guidance to Members, staff and customers on the protocols for making information accessible to all.

2. ARGUMENT

2.1 The policy provides the framework to ensure that people have equal access to all Council information.

2.2 The guidance provides the framework to ensure customers have equal access to services.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

3.1 To approve the Accessible Information Policy and Guidance

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The policy is required in order to ensure that the Council supplies information on an equal basis to all its customers.

4.2 The guidance is required to allow equal access to services.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

5.1 The only cost of producing the policy and guidance will be that of printing which will be covered by existing budgets. However there will be further costs of translating, interpreting etc. once the policy and guidance has been adopted and

this will have to be covered from existing budgets by the section requiring the service.

5.2 The human resource implication is in respect of adopting the policy and guidance.

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 None

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

7.1 The adoption of the policy and guidance will promote equal opportunity throughout Copeland.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Accessible Information Policy

Appendix B – Accessible Services Guidance

List of Background Documents: None

List of Consultees: Leader, OSC Chairs/Vice Chairs, Corporate Team

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Will ensure information is accessible to all
Impact on Sustainability	None
Impact on Rural Proofing	None
Health and Safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	4.1
Children and Young Persons Implications	Will ensure information is accessible to all
Human Rights Act Implications	Will ensure information is accessible to all

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision NO

Copeland Borough Council

**Interpreters, Translators and
Accessible Information:
Policy and Guidance**

**In the context of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000),
the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) and the Equality
Standard for Local Government (Best Value Performance
Indicator 2)**

Issued: June 2007

Issued by: Head of Customer Services

0845 054 5600

If you would like a copy of this document in large print, Braille, audio, or in a different language by calling 0845 054 8600.

আপনি 0845 054 8600 -এই নম্বর ফোন করে, বিভিন্ন ফরম্যাট যেমন বড় প্রিন্ট, ব্রেইল, অডিও বা একটি ভিন্ন ভাষাতে এই নথিটির একটি কপি পেতে পারেন।

Pode obter uma cópia deste documento em vários formatos, como por exemplo em Braille, áudio, ou numa outra língua. Para tal ligue para o 0845 054 8600.

如果您想取文件的不同版本，如：大字体印刷、盲文、音或不同言版本，致：0845 054 8600。

Paskambinę telefonu 0845 054 8600, galite užsisakyti šio dokumento kopiją įvairiais formatais, pavyzdžiui, atspausdintą dideliu šriftu, Brailio raštu, užsisakyti garso įrašą arba gauti dokumentą, išverstą į norimą kalbą.

Aby otrzymać kopię tego dokumentu w innych formatach, takich jak duży druk, druk Braille'm, audio, lub w innym języku proszę dzwonić pod numer 0845 054 8600.

0845 054 8600'u arayarak, bu dokümanın bir kopyasını büyük puntolu, körler için kabartmalı, ses dosyası gibi değişik formatlarda veya farklı bir dilde edinebilirsiniz.

Contents

1.0 Introduction	Page 4
2.0 Accessing Interpreters and Translators	Page 7
3.0 Protocol on using Interpreters and Translators	Page 9
4.0 Accessible Information	Page 10
5.0 Accessible Information in Alternative Formats	Page 11
6.0 Frequently Asked Questions	Page 13
Appendix I: National Guidance	Page 14
Appendix II: Confidentiality Clause	Page 15

1.0 Introduction

This policy provides guidelines to make us as a Council accessible to everyone. This includes:

- The public
- Staff
- Elected Members
- Partner organisations.

The policy has been written both for staff and elected Members in the Council. It has also been written so members of the public can access it. Finally it should assist our working with partner organizations, with the aim of developing future protocols on accessibility that would cut across organizations.

This policy provides an overall framework for people to access us through:

- Printed information
- Electronic information
- Face to face contact
- Telephone

We will cover all areas of access to information including:

- Alternative formats
- Translators
- Interpreters

Our policy aims to make accessible services and information:

- Straightforward
- Part of the Council's day to day work.

This policy provides an overall framework. Some of our services will require a more robust approach. Where this is the case the appropriate section should develop more detailed guidance. Details of national guidance is shown at Appendix I.

There will be reference to other Council policies as appropriate.

1.1 Information is a right

Every member of the public has a right to access our service.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, place a duty on local authorities to publish race and disability equality schemes. This includes making our information accessible to everyone.

The Freedom of Information Act 2005 gives every member of the public a right to request information on any aspect of our work.

This means that people have a right to our information in a language or format that suits them.

1.2 How this will make a difference for the public

Our policy is committed to making information and services available:

- To individuals
- On request
- Without delay
- Via translators and interpreters
- In alternative formats
- In alternative media.

This applies to everything we produce – letters, emails, leaflets, minutes, and reports.

1.3 Accessibility and Council policies

Promoting equality of opportunity is one of our key values and this policy helps make us accessible to all.

In Copeland we need to address discrimination in our rural and urban settings. This applies particularly when people want to access information and services.

1.4 Commitment to accessibility

All our new policies must include the following statement at the beginning:

You can get a copy of this document in different formats such as large print, braille, audio, or in a different language by calling 0845 054 8600

The statement must be translated into the following languages:

- Bengali
- Portuguese
- Cantonese
- Polish
- Lithuanian
- Turkish

A word document with this statement in all six languages is now available and can be copied, contact the Communications Office if you would like a copy of the translations.

2.0 Accessing Interpreters and Translators

This part focuses on making services accessible to people whose first language is not written or spoken English.

2.1 Access to interpreters

Interpreters are needed when people cannot speak English, or rely upon a signing system to communicate.

We have the following responsibilities regarding interpreters:

- To provide them on request.
- To only use them with a person's consent.

2.2 Continued contact with an interpreter

Where you have contact with an interpreter, there is no need to route every request through the Equality Group. However all requests must be copied to a member of the Equality Group. This way we can:

- Monitor requests for interpreters.
- Check for key languages, issues, localities and services.
- Use data to inform policy, and partnership working.
- Keep track of the changing patterns of languages spoken in the county.

2.3 Accessing a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter

British Sign Language is now a recognised language in its own right. The Cumbria Deaf Association provide an interpreting service. They can be contacted on 01228 606434.

2.4 Language Line

We have a pay as you go account with Language line which means that you can contact them for interpretation or translation.

2.5 Type-talk and text phoning

The Cumbria Deaf Association recommend we use TypeTalk for initial enquiries. The number for TypeTalk is 18001 followed by the number being called.

2.6 Translators

At any point in time someone may want a document translated into a language other than English. Costs for translations should be met by the service that is providing the information in the first place.

Tongue Tied.
Waterside House,
Basin Road North
Hove
East Sussex.
BN41 1UY

Tel: 01273 419999
Fax: 01273 415111
email: sales@tongue-tied.co.uk

Transword
8 Oak Bank
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 6HY

Tel: 01946 694094
Fax: 01946 591968
Email: transw@aol.com

3.0 Protocol on using Interpreters and Translators

This section provides overview guidance on using interpreters and translators including:

- Referral
- Confidentiality
- People providing their own interpreters
- Emergency situations.

This protocol reflects the scope of the entire Council.

3.1 Referral

Where the Council has an agreement with an agency providing interpreters and translators, it is important that referrals are made in accordance with the agency's referral policies.

3.2 Confidentiality

Staff should ensure that interpreters and translators sign a written undertaking that they will keep confidential all information being translated or interpreted, see Appendix II for approved undertaking.

3.3 Using approved interpreters

Where possible we should use interpreters who are qualified and independent. Where a person insists on using friends, relatives and local contacts, we will agree if there is no concern about conflicts of interest.

For services where there is a fundamental conflict of interest in using friends, relatives or contractors, the service should develop a protocol in line with its service needs. These protocols may extend the guidance in this paragraph to only using qualified interpreters.

3.4 In emergencies

In emergencies you may have to act immediately in situations where communication is difficult.

Some services will need to develop emergency provision for accessing interpreters and translators. This should be included in their protocols.

4.0 Accessible Information:

4.1 Using Plain English

The Plain English Campaign define Plain English as:

'something that the intended audience can read, understand and act upon the first time they read it'.

The Plain English Campaign list what they consider plain language to be.

- Using short words that are commonly used.
- Using 'you' and 'we'.
- Not being afraid to give instructions.
- Using positive language.
- Avoiding jargon.
- Explaining what acronyms stand for, such as Citizen's Advice Bureau instead of CAB.
- Using words rather than abbreviations or symbols, for example care of, not c/o.
- Keeping sentences and paragraphs short (aim for maximum sentences of 15-20 words).
- Using headings to break up writing.
- Explaining any technical terms you have to use.
- Avoiding long-winded sentences.
- Using the active voice, 'I will eat jelly', rather than the passive voice, 'jelly will be eaten by me'.
- Choosing a photograph, diagram or illustration to replace long written descriptions.
- Only using basic punctuation. , ; : / ()
- Avoiding phrases such as inter alia and raison d'être, where an English equivalent can be used.

You can find all this at: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/plainenglishguide.html>

4.2 Keeping documents clear

Copeland Borough Council has Image and Branding Protocols which outline the guidelines to follow in order to keep documents clear and easy to read.

5.0 Accessible Information in alternative formats

The Council has a responsibility to make available materials in alternative formats.

5.1 Electronic information

Electronically held information can be adapted or translated before being sent out. In some cases readers will have adaptations to their computers so all they will need is an email or CD-ROM.

5.2 Coloured Paper

Printing material in a different colour or onto coloured paper can help some readers with dyslexia. It is important to ask the individual reader what is best for them.

5.3 Audio Tape and CD

When putting information onto tape you should commission a professional firm to do it. This can be arranged through the Communications Office.

5.4 Braille

Some people prefer information in Braille. Before responding to requests for information in Braille it is important to check that the person would rather have information in Braille than on tape. This can be arranged through the Communications Office.

5.5 Translation

Translation is a critical way to make documents accessible to people who read in other languages. All requests for translation must be met in the language requested.

For key documents it is important to be aware of key languages, in Copeland this changes. The list below is not definitive but shows the key languages in April 2006:

- Bengali
- Portuguese
- Cantonese
- Polish

- Lithuanian
- Turkish

5.6 Using pictorial information

Many people may find information easier to understand if text is supported by illustrations. These could include:

- Photos,
- Flow charts
- Tables
- Diagrams.

MENCAP provide helpful information on how to make printed information accessible for people with learning disabilities and literacy difficulties:

http://www.mencap.org.uk/download/making_myself_clear.pdf

5.7 Cumbria accessibility organisations

A number of useful contact details can be found in the Equality & Diversity Handbook.

6.0 Frequently Asked Questions

Producing documents

Question 1: What if the document has statistics and diagrams?

If someone has requested a document in tape or Braille, let them know about the statistics and diagrams, and ask if they would like these read out aloud, or translated into Braille. Offer for someone to meet and explain any diagrams or statistics. Lastly if using pictures and diagrams on websites, always make sure that a caption appears when someone hovers a mouse over the picture. If someone is using a text only version, the caption should appear in the text that explains the picture.

Question 2: What if the document is aimed at a broad public?

All documents for general and large-scale distribution should be designed to reach the widest possible audience. It is important to plan for producing them in alternative formats from the very beginning. When planning budgets for documents it is important to build in the costs of translation and conversion to alternative formats.

Question 3: What if the document needs checking for accessibility?

Seek advice from local, regional and national organisations on the accessibility of the document. Also check the document against this policy and make sure that the Equality Group is aware of the document.

Question 4: Where should copies in translation and alternative formats be available from?

The Council Website is a critical place to store information in alternative formats. This can include British Sign Language video clips, as well as documents in other languages. In addition libraries, schools, community centres and targeted voluntary sector organisations can store information in translation and alternative formats.

Appendix I: National guidance

Disabilities: Accessibility guides

Learning disabilities: Mencap

http://www.mencap.org.uk/html/accessibility/accessibility_guides.asp

Visual impairments/blindness: RNIB

http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public_seeitright.hcsp

Hearing impairments/deafness: RNID

http://www.rnid.org.uk/information_resources/communicating_better/

Plain English: Accessibility guide

Plain English Campaign

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/guides.html>

Appendix II: Confidentiality Clause

Undertaking as to Secrecy

In carrying out an interpretation/ translation (pl delete as appropriate) service (“the Service”) for Copeland Borough Council (“the Council”) I undertake:-

- (i) Not at any time during or after the contract to divulge or allow to be divulged to any person any confidential information relating to the documents to be translated / information acquired during interpretation (pl delete as appropriate) other than to persons who have signed a secrecy undertaking in a form approved by the Council;
- (ii) Not to permit any persons to assist in the provision of the Service unless such person has signed a secrecy undertaking;
- (iii) Without prejudice to Clauses (i) and (ii) above any information which I have obtained or will obtain from the Council, whether directly or indirectly, shall be kept strictly confidential at all times and used solely for the purpose of its performance. Unless the prior written consent of the Council has been obtained, no matter arising from the performance of the Service may be communicated to the media or any other outside person, nor may it be published or circulated to the media or any other outside person, whether orally, in writing, electronically, by photograph or otherwise. I shall ensure that anyone I employ or engage in connection with the Service is aware of these provisions as to confidence and that a contractual obligation is placed upon them to observe them. Once any particular job of work is concluded I shall return all documents, whether originals or copies, to the Council.

Signed...

Dated...

If customers have difficulty in accessing our services because of disability, understanding or language, it is our problem, not theirs.

Giving customers assistance to meet their specific needs is helping them to exercise their rights, not doing them a favour.

- Ask what help the customer needs and offer a solution.

- Wait until the customer has accepted your offer of help before giving it.
- Only give the sort of help that the customer is asking for.
- Do not underestimate a customer's ability. Something that might seem a great problem to you may be something that they are very used to dealing with.
- You should always treat the customer the way in which they want to be treated.

Difficulty speaking English

- Never ignore someone if you don't understand him or her.
- Speak more slowly than usual, using short sentences
- Ask "open" questions such as "when", "why", "what", "where", "who". Answers to these types of questions will let you know if you have been understood. Don't shout.
- Use clear gestures to show what you mean.
- Get help from an interpreter if possible.

Mobility Problems

- Always talk to wheelchair user/disabled person not their carer.
- Address the customer at their level, where possible sit at the same level as the wheelchair user
- Only push a customer's wheelchair if they ask you to
- Ask if you can help customers on crutches or with other mobility problems – offer them a seat.
- Ask how you can help customers who have breathing or heart problems.

Hearing difficulties

- Tell customers about our facilities for those with hearing difficulties e.g. induction loop and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter service
- Find out how the customer wants to communicate
- Do not shout. Speak clearly and slow down slightly
- To enable customers to lip read, make sure that you have the customer's attention and they are looking at you. Attract the customer's attention by a wave or touch on the shoulder.
- When speaking, talk in a well-lit area with the light on your face. Look directly at the customer and don't turn away while talking. Don't obstruct your face. Keep background noise to a minimum.
- Rephrase what you're saying if it isn't understood
- If a sign language interpreter is used, continue to talk to the customer
- Be polite – don't finish a deaf person's sentences
- Write things down if necessary

Visually impaired

- Introduce yourself and anyone else clearly. A name badge will be of no use.
- Ask the customer whether they want to use your arm for guidance and if so offer it, do not assume they can see where it is. Gripping above the elbow will enable the customer to be guided more easily.
- Be absolutely clear when giving directions or information and mention any obstacles
- If you are guiding the customer to a seat, put their hand on the back of the chair, so they will know which way the chair is facing
- State what you are going to do before doing it
- Don't leave a blind or partially sighted person alone without explaining or saying goodbye

- Let the customer know that we can provide information on audio tape, in Braille or in large print. The Communications Officer will be responsible for providing materials in the desired format.

Learning and speech difficulties

- Don't correct or speak for someone with speech difficulties. Always wait until they have explained what they want.
- If you don't understand a person with learning difficulties, ask them to repeat what they have said. Be patient.