

Accessible Information Policy

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Document Control

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Author	James Young, (Former CBC Scrutiny Officer)
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Revision History

Version Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Reviewed By	Description of Revision
V0.2	15/01/19	Policy Officer	Added references
V0.3	17/01/19	Data Protection Officer	Added content in relation to Copeland Borough Council Privacy Notice
V0.4	30/01/19	Accessible Information Policy Task and Finish Group	Changed colours of font to make the policy more accessible and update the contributor list.
V0.5	May 2021	Communications and Engagement Manager, Policy Officer	Routine review and updates

Document Approval

Version	Approved By	Date
V0.2	Communication Department	10/01/19
V0.2	Policy Officer	15/01/19
V0.3	Governance & Data Protection	17/01/19

V0.3	Customer Services Department	23/01/19
V0.4	Accessible Information Policy Task and Finish Group	30/01/19
V0.5	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	08/02/19
V0.5	Full Council	19/02/19

Document Distribution

This policy is to be available to all staff and elected members of Copeland Borough Council and placed on the Council's Intranet Site. A copy must also be provided to contractors and 3rd parties undertaking work on Copeland Borough Council premises.

Contributors

Source	Document
Frome Town Council	Accessibility Policy
East Dunbartonshire Council	Accessible Information Policy 2016-19
Copeland Borough Council	Accessible Information Task and Finish Group
Copeland Disability Forum	Co-optee on to Accessible Information Policy Task and Finish Group
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)	Co-optee on to Accessible Information Policy Task and Finish Group

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Purpose

The purpose of the Policy is to set out what all customers, including members of the public, employees, prospective employees, elected members and partner organisations, can expect from information provided by Copeland Borough Council (the Council) and likewise what is expected of Council officers in their provision of information. This Policy provides an overall framework for recipients and providers of information. It ensures that printed, electronic, face-to-face and telephone information is available:

- To all customers in a manner that meets their needs
- On request
- Without delay
- Via translator or interpreter if required
- In an alternative format if required

Policy Benefits

The aims of this Policy are to reaffirm the commitment of the Council to provide information in an accessible manner, to set out the range of information provision methods and format that anyone can expect to receive from the Council and to provide clear information for anyone seeking to access information from the Council.

The intended outcome of this Policy is that all members of the public, Council employees, Elected Members and colleagues in partner organisations have more equality of opportunity when communicating with, or being in receipt of, communication from Copeland Borough Council.

It is also intended that this Policy makes the process of creating accessible services and information straightforward and embedded further in Council business.

This policy provides an overall framework for accessible information. However, it is also recognised that some Council Services will require additional support or

resources. Where this is the case, the Service should contact the Communications Team.

Introduction

The Council is obliged to make information accessible to everyone; not only to comply with legal duties but because it is essential to its vision to achieve the best for the people of Copeland.

The Equality Act (2010) consolidates all previous forms of equality legislation and strengthens the requirement to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. It replaces previous provisions in the Race Relations Act (2000) and the Disability Discriminations Act (2005). The Equality Act (2010) shifts the focus for listed public bodies from responding reactively to responding proactively to unequal experiences of public service. This includes accessing information in any form. Failure to provide this in an appropriate format for an individual or a group of people is likely to lead to discrimination and would be unlawful under equality legislation.

The Human Rights Act (1998) brings most of the fundamental rights and freedoms contained in the European Convention on Human Rights directly into UK law. This includes, but is not exclusive to, the right to respect for private and family life, for home and correspondence and the right to education. Article 14 of the Human Rights Act (1998) prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of all rights and freedoms set out in the Convention on any ground, such as language, disability or age.

Scope

This Policy provides details on the range of accessible information methods and formats that customers can expect to receive from Copeland Borough Council. The Policy applies to information provided by Council staff and elected members.

Definitions

Plain Language

In order to make our documents clear and easy to read the Council will apply the principles of the Plain English Campaign. The Communications Team can advise all Council Services on the use of Plain English in their documents and written communications. 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 define 'plain language' as:

- 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 instead of CA
- Using words rather than abbreviations or symbols, for example, 'care of' instead of 'c/o'
- Keeping sentences and paragraphs short (a maximum of 15-20 word sentences)
- Using headings to break up writing
- Explaining any technical terms you have to use
- Avoiding long-winded sentences
- Using the active voice rather than the passive voice. For example, 'I will eat cakes' rather than 'cakes 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.
- More information can be found at:
<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>

Roles and Responsibilities

Copeland Borough Council employees and elected members who produce or distribute information on behalf of the Council have a duty to ensure that this information is accessible and available in a variety of formats on request.

This includes information given in writing or verbally and on the Council website.

Policy Details including Procedures

Written Information

Type Size:

The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) and Action for Blind People recommend font size 14 point as a minimum.

Type Weight:

Medium or **bold** weight fonts are more accessible than light ones.

Typeface:

The Council has agreed that Calibri minimum font size 12 will be used for day to day use.

Simulated handwriting and ~~elaborate~~ typefaces are difficult to read and should not be used.

Contrast:

Aim for a clear colour contrast. Black text on a white background and **strong blue text on a yellow background** provides the best contrast. Avoid using ink which is

a darker tone of the same colour as the paper. People with colour blindness may have problems distinguishing **reds** or **greens**.

Avoid using glossy paper because the glare makes it difficult to read. Choose uncoated paper or matt. Thin paper should not be used when printing your document on both sides. If the text is showing through from the reverse side, then the paper is too thin.

Type Styles:

Avoid sentences using CAPITAL LETTERS, *italics* or underlined text as these are generally harder to read. **Bold** is more accessible but only in small amounts.

Page Layout and Word Spacing:

To make a document accessible:

- Keep the same space between each word.
- Do not *condense* or *s t r e t c h* words.
- Try not to write more than 60-70 letters per line.
- Do not split words at the end of lines.
- Align text to the left margin so it is easy to find the start and finish of each line.
- Avoid justified text as it creates uneven spacing between words.
- Break information down into sections with titles and subtitles.

Navigational Aids:

It is good practice to use numbered headings and paragraphs in long documents, also to use a contents list or index to guide readers to relevant sections and pages. It is also helpful to place clear page numbers in the same position on each page and leaving a space between paragraphs makes reading easier.

Illustrations:

Where possible try not to write letters over pictures.

Watermarks:

Watermarks can be confusing to a reader although they are a useful tool especially for DRAFT or CONFIDENTIAL documents. An alternate option to state DRAFT or CONFIDENTIAL in large bold print at the beginning of the document and on the top of each page.

Large Print:

Large print documents must be made available on request. The RNIB defines large print as a minimum font size of Point 16. Action for Blind People recommend anything between Point 16 to **Point 22**. It is good practice to ask people what size they would like, as no single size suits everyone.

With long documents it is a good idea to ask the person whether they want all or part of a document made available in large print. In some cases they may only want a summary. If a font size larger than 22 is requested then audio shall be provided.

Verbal Information

Access to Interpreters:

Interpreters are needed where a person finds that communicating in English is a barrier to getting the information, advice or service they need.

We have the following responsibilities regarding interpreters:

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

Due to the low level of request for this service, the Council does not have direct access to interpreters. However, if required, we will endeavour to respond within a reasonable timescale to find a suitable person who can provide an adequate level of interpretation.

Alternative Formats

Braille and moon are tactile (touch-based) communication formats used by some people who are blind, deafblind or have visual loss. Braille is used far more commonly than moon, however, staff should take care to ask an individual who is blind to self-identify their own preferred format and avoid assuming that it will be Braille. With the advent of increasingly sophisticated 'screen readers' and other assistive technologies, many people who are blind now identify email / online information as their preferred information format. This increases the importance of ensuring that documents are created accessibly.

Although only a relatively small number of people who are blind now identify Braille as their preferred format, Braille remains an important communication format for many people who are blind, particularly older people, and is the only communication format for some people who are deafblind.

Transcription of documents, information or online content into Braille should be undertaken by an organisation specialist in production of this format. Braille documents should be handled and stored with care, so as not to damage the transcription by creating unwanted indents or creases. Braille documents should be protected from damage when being posted with protective packaging and a clear 'do not bend' instruction

Monitoring of Policy Adherence

This policy will be reviewed at a minimum of every two years to incorporate any changes in legislation or guidance from the Equalities Act (2010).

Any information or publications that are sent out to the public must be sent to the Communications Department to ensure that they adhere to this policy.

Copeland Borough Council is committed to protecting the privacy of the public when using its services. The Copeland Borough Council Privacy Notice explains how information about the public is protected and kept secure. It can be found on the Council website: [Privacy Notice](#)

References

Equality Act 2010

Human Rights Act 1998

Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018

Copeland Borough Council Social Inclusion Policy

Copeland Borough Council Communications Strategy

Copeland Borough Council Privacy notice

Plain English Campaign

Other sources of advice and support:

RNIB

Cumbria Deaf Association

Action for Blind People

West Cumbria Society for the Blind

