Factsheet 7: **Design**

Inaccessible design stops some disabled people accessing content. Planning is key when designing communications to make sure as many people as possible can access your content. Inclusive design can help you attract disabled people to your activity and also help you to comply with the reasonable adjustments set out by The Equality Act 2010.

Planning: Create an inclusive communications policy

The best way to improve design in communications across your organisation is to develop an inclusive communications policy that clearly sets out your commitment to inclusion. Your policy can include guidance about inclusive design, which you can share with your in-house design team or external design agencies. It is also cheaper and quicker to build in inclusive design principles into communications from the start of any campaign or project rather than doing it at the end.

Communication barriers

Where possible your communications should be accessible and inclusive to all, but sometimes the type of communication means that it will not be accessible to certain groups. The impairment groupings below illustrate potential barriers that can be identified, adapted and/or removed. Typical communications barriers include:

Blind/visual impairment - print publications (magazines, flyers and reports), inaccessible websites, use of images, PowerPoint presentations, PDF documents, colour contrast, posters, displays, banner stands, videos without audio commentary.

Deaf/hearing impairment - face-to-face communications such as speeches, presentations, awards ceremonies, announcements via loudspeakers and coaching sessions, videos without captioning or British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation, musical accompaniment (events, ceremonies on videos).

Learning disability - complex use of language, data visualisation, layout of websites and documents, colour contrast, use of images, lengthy communications.

Mobility/physical impairment - website layout and accessibility (e.g. too many clicks), positioning of signage, posters and flyers, weight of printed publications.

Mental health condition - layout, use of colour, tone and style of language.

Web accessibility

The way in which websites are designed can sometimes create barriers for people accessing information on the internet with the use of assistive technology or for those with cognitive or mobility impairments. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) have been produced by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C, the web's governing body). WCAG is essentially a set of checkpoints that help ensure that websites are accessible to the widest possible audience. To meet the needs of different groups and different situations there are three levels of compliance to the standards: A (lowest), AA, and AAA (highest). Web designers and design agencies with experience of developing accessible websites will be able to help you understand and implement the guidelines.

W3C provides an 'easy check' overview which allows you to assess whether your current website is accessible or not.

You can also use web accessibility software to make your website more accessible. Examples include:

Claro Software   www.clarosoftware.com

Recite Me   www.reciteme.com

Texthelp   www.texthelp.com

Use of fonts and text layout

Unjustified text is easier to read, so use it where possible when laying out your copy. Don't use italics or capital letters to emphasise a word or title, use bold or a larger or different style of font. Your font choice can have a big impact on the accessibility of your communications. Use accessible sans serif fonts (fonts without the little decorative lines on letters) like Arial or Calibri, instead of serif fonts like Times New Roman, which are harder to read. Font size 12 is considered to be the minimum size at which people read comfortably. Font size 14 is used for Easyread formats.

Italics
CAPITAL LETTERS
Times New Roman ❌

Bold
Larger Font
Arial / Calibri ✔

Images and infographics

Shading or images behind text can reduce the colour contrast between the text and the background image. A blurring of colours or a weakening of the definition between text and shading/images will make the communication more difficult for some and impossible for others to access. Highlight words or key facts by placing them in a text box or using a larger font size instead.

In digital communications using alternative text labels (also known as alt text or alt tags) is vital for accessibility. All images and graphics need to be tagged with alt text labels. This is so a disabled person using a screen-reader can access the alt text description of what the image used is composed of, even if they cannot see it.

The designs used in infographics are often highly sophisticated and complex, conveying large amounts of data visually but an infographic can be accessible if it is designed correctly.

Use of colour and colour contrast

Too many colours can be disorienting, especially if communications from your organisation are usually in a certain colour combination. A vast array of colour can distract the reader and make it harder for your message to be understood. Over-use of colour might be problematic for people with learning disability, people with Autism, people with a lower than average reading age or for those who don't speak English as their first language.

There are a variety of free tools on the internet which allow you to check the colour contrast of text on a certain background.

See the **Resources and further information section** at the end of this factsheet for weblinks to free tools that will allow you to check the colour contrast of text on a specific background.

Layout

Any document or communication should be laid out clearly and simply in order to ensure accessibility of the information. The main things to consider with layout are:

Headings - ensure headings are clearly marked. This is important for people who might be reading your document using a screen reader or text-to-speech software.

Visual order - if you are using tables in a document that have multiple columns or if you are laying out your text in more than one column you make sure that the underlying structure of the document (how it is technically set up) actually corresponds to the visual order of the information.

Images - if images are important for your communication clearly position them and make them distinct from any text, shading or overlay.

Key points

- Plan carefully and factor in accessible design from the beginning - it will save you time and money
- Understand communications barriers
- Factor in web accessibility
- Consider the use of: fonts and text layout, images and infographics, web accessibility, colour and colour contrast, and layout

Resources and further information

For more information about how to build accessible design into your apps, videos, printed docs, PDFs, posters and promotional communications access our **Inclusive Communications Guide** on our website.

Here are some useful resources on inclusive design:

University of Cambridge Inclusive Design Toolkit
www.inclusivedesigntoolkit.com

Design Council resources
www.designcouncil.org.uk

Sport England Active Nation image library
www.sportengland.org

SPORT ENGLAND

 activityalliance.org.uk   01509 227750   info@activityalliance.org.uk

This document is available in Word format. Please contact us if you need support.
Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English Federation of Disability Sport.
Registered Charity no. 1075180