

## **Making your communications accessible: Best practice guidance for organisations**

Clear and accessible communication helps ensure that everyone, including people who are blind or partially sighted, can understand and engage with your services. This guide outlines practical steps to help make your written materials, signage, digital content, and public information more inclusive.

### **Why accessible communication matters**

Many everyday documents, signs, websites and emails unintentionally exclude people with sight loss. Small adjustments can make a big difference, and most are simple and low-cost. Making your communications accessible doesn't just benefit people with sight loss, it improves clarity for everyone.

### **Printed and digital documents**

Make sure your written materials are easy to read and screen reader-friendly:

- Offer alternative formats on request, such as large print (font size 16), giant print (font size 22), Word documents (more accessible for people using screen readers), or audio versions.

- Use clear sans-serif fonts such as Arial.
- Avoid italics or using all capital letters – both are harder to read, especially for people using magnifiers or with visual fatigue.
- Reserve underlining for links – this makes it clearer that the text is clickable.
- Use plain English – the average reading age in the UK is 9.
- Structure content using proper heading styles and avoid using text boxes, which are difficult for screen readers to navigate.
- Use left alignment for both text and images. People with sight loss often scan the left side of a page or screen first and content placed centrally or to the right may be missed. Left alignment also provides a consistent reading flow and is easier to track with magnifiers.
- Use 1.5 line spacing where possible. This extra space between lines makes text easier to read, reduces visual crowding, and is especially helpful for people with visual fatigue or low vision.
- Avoid splitting names, phone numbers, or postcodes across lines.

- Add the phrase “**End of document**” at the very end of your document. This helps people using screen readers know they’ve reached the end and haven’t missed anything. Use a heading style so it’s included in the document’s structure.
- Include page numbers in the format Page 1 of 5, ideally on the bottom left-hand side of the page and in the same font size as your main text. This helps with orientation, especially when using magnification or printed versions.

## **Emails and online documents**

When sharing digital materials:

- Use accessible headings, not just bold text. Headings are essential for screen reader users, helping them navigate and understand the content without listening to everything in full. Use the Styles menu in Word to add proper headings.
- Include descriptive link text (e.g. “Read more on our website” rather than “click here”). This allows screen reader users to jump between links and know where each one leads.
- Avoid using colour alone to convey meaning as around 1 in 12 people are colour blind.

- Ensure good contrast between text and background. Use the automatic font colour setting so text adjusts automatically to different viewing preferences.
- Add alt text to all images. Alt text is a short description read aloud by screen readers, enabling blind people to access the content of the image.
- Avoid sending image-only flyers, which screen readers can't interpret.

## **Signage and display materials**

Clear, accessible signage is key for helping people navigate public spaces.

Good signage should:

- Use high contrast colours, e.g. black text on a white or yellow background (white on navy is also effective)
- Avoid shiny surfaces to reduce glare
- Be printed in at least 22pt font for signage viewed up close (use larger sizes depending on distance)
- Use a clear, sans serif font like Arial or Verdana
- Be well lit and free from shadows
- Be placed consistently and at an accessible height

## **In public settings such as galleries or exhibitions:**

- Display art descriptions in giant print (minimum 22pt)

- Use good lighting so printed information is clearly visible
- Offer large and giant print as well as digital versions of any handouts or guides

## **Events, presentations and video**

Make your events and media more inclusive by:

- Speaking clearly and describing visual content aloud during presentations
- Including transcripts or captions for videos where possible
- Use audio-led videos where key information is spoken aloud. If your video includes important visuals that aren't described, add a short description in the post or accompanying text to explain what happens on screen.
- Sharing presentation slides or materials in accessible formats before the event

## **Website and social media**

If you manage digital content:

- Use alt text on all images and graphics
- Avoid embedding key text within images
- Keep hashtags in camel case (e.g. #ThisIsAccessible not #thisisaccessible)
- Make sure your website meets WCAG 2.1 accessibility standards – including features like good colour contrast

and full keyboard accessibility (so users can navigate without a mouse)

- If your image includes important information (like event details or quotes), include that information in the main post text so it's visible to everyone – not just those using screen readers

## **Ask for feedback**

One of the best ways to improve accessibility is to ask people with lived experience of sight loss.

If you're not sure whether something is accessible, ask – or test it with a screen reader or magnification tool. Testing your materials in this way is one of the most effective ways to create truly inclusive communication.

## **End of document**

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As a partnership we provide local services for people living with sight loss across Bristol, Bath & North-East Somerset and South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

Sight Support West of England is a registered charity: 1178384.

Wiltshire Sight is a registered charity: 1119462.

Insight Gloucestershire is a registered charity 204279.

Registered Office: St Lucy's Sight Centre, The Beeches, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2AT.