

## **Improving Communications Group**

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PROMOTING EQUALITY OF ACCESS TO COUNCIL SERVICES

# **Improving Communications**

**Good Action Guides for working with people who are hearing or sight impaired**

# Improving Communications

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## Reverse Information flow

4.22 It must be remembered that people might wish to send information IN to North Lincolnshire Council in alternative formats like Braille. This should be acceptable.

- 4.19 Continuing awareness training should be arranged for council officers, staff and councillors.

### **How and what information should be gathered?**

- 4.20 The Data Protection Act requires that written consent be sought from individuals wishing to take part in the scheme. This could be included in a form asking about format preferences etc. The form (or tape alternative) should ask about the individual's preferred format and include the following details:-

**Braille:** Grade of Braille and possible contraction exceptions if new user or learning / Capitals.

**e-text:** the preferred format eg txt /rtf and transfer medium eg disk or by email.

**Moon:** grade of Moon / numbers / size.

**Large Print:** Font and print size, paper colour and finish etc (Use ClearPrint guidelines).

- 4.21 Those on the existing register should be informed about the new database and its purpose via audio and large print letter. Copies of the consent form should also be sent and follow-ups done if not returned.

## **Improving Communications For Deaf, Deafened And Hard Of Hearing People**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people throughout Britain are often faced with limited access to services and in certain cases denied access altogether. The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) makes ensuring equality of access a legal responsibility.
- 1.2 In 1992 the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) mounted a campaign, entitled Louder than Words which sought to raise awareness of deaf access issues.
- 1.3 A number of Councils subsequently adopted Louder than Words as a code of practice to follow in their customer services strategies.
- 1.4 This good action guide follows their example and is based upon the Louder than Words principles.

### **2 LOUDER THAN WORDS CHARTER**

- 2.1 The key recommendations of the charter are as follows. The council will seek to ensure

that where appropriate or possible these will be met.

(a) That as a deaf, deafened or hard of hearing customer you can expect:

- Our staff to be trained to communicate effectively with you.
- A clear, visible and easy to read deaf awareness policy which sets out your rights.
- Information about our products/services that is readily available and fully accessible
- Appropriate equipment (eg loops) which are correctly installed and regularly updated and tested.
- A good listening environment which is well sign posted and well lit.
- Clear health and safety procedures to protect you and alert you to any dangers.
- Your requests for communication support to be met whenever possible.
- This organisation will promote awareness to the RNID Typetalk and BT Text Direct service through training and information.

population identified. If fully sighted people read the newspaper and alert others, then this is acceptable

- 4.16 The Social Services database could be used to send an audio tape (the only completely accessible medium) to existing registrations. This tape would also be available to those responding to the media campaign, unless they specifically request other media.

#### **Continuing publicity and Information policy**

- 4.17 It is essential that people with a print impairment know what is available to ensure equality of access. (Satisfies the general commitment to access in the Customer Charter).
- 4.18 People with a print impairment need to be kept informed. It must not be assumed that people with a print impairment are only interested in "blind" issues.

The production of a newsletter for people with a print impairment is needed. It would identify "accessible facilities" and include a list of Council publications. This could be a one-off distributed via social workers, the Talking Newspaper and Lindsey Blind Society.

need to liaise with other Council departments as to the distribution of enhanced materials, whilst maintaining the confidentiality of the database.

## **Awareness Training**

4.13 If the levels of awareness are raised then more print impaired people will be able to access information without the need for post-production intervention to enhance it further.

## **Publicity to find target population**

4.14 This requires a publicity campaign across the North Lincolnshire Council area involving a range of methods:

- Social Services database - questionnaire to existing registrations
- Media campaign local radio & TV
- The Talking Newspaper
- Evening Telegraph(s)
- Council Staff
- Voluntary Organisations
- 'Direct'

4.15 It is recognised that some of the above are not accessible, but the point is to have a high profile campaign to attempt to get the target

- To be consulted about the quality and extent of our deaf awareness to help us constantly to improve.

(b) As a deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person seeking employment with us, or as an employee, you can expect all of the above quality standards plus the following:

- Information about our employment opportunities that is readily available and fully accessible.
- Communication support when being interviewed.
- Supervision and support from a line manager who is deaf aware.
- Equal access to professional development and promotion opportunities.

## **3 North Lincolnshire Council's Strategy for Action**

3.1 North Lincolnshire Council has Equality Standards incorporated into the new Diversity Policy & Good Action Guide. This seeks to ensure that council services are accessible to all of the community it serves. This Improving Communications good action guide identifies the specific actions it will take in relation to its deaf, deafened and hard of hearing public.

## Sound Systems

- 3.2 1 in 7 people in the UK have a hearing loss. 5.6 million people\* within the UK are sufficiently hearing impaired to benefit from a hearing aid and most, but not all, of these aids are enhanced when used at the correct setting with an induction loop. An audit has been undertaken throughout the Authority to identify where it is appropriate to fit induction loops.
- 3.4 A register of loops is being compiled which will be published as part of the Council's general guide to services.
- 3.5 The register will be updated as and when is necessary.
- 3.6 Further information on induction loop locations can be obtained from the Council's Access Officer 01724 296739 (brian.woffinden@northlincs.gov.uk) or the Sensory Impairment Team (01724 298000, textphone 01724 298035).

\*1997 figures provided by CACDP compiled with the assistance of RNID

## Information gathering to locate target population

- 4.9 There is a need to gather information about who is potentially a print impaired user of information, and what their specific requirements are.
- 4.10 Social services hold a register covering many blind and partially sighted people. Some are not registered whilst others do not have a defined visual impairment but have difficulty in reading standard materials either because of poor vision, physical or cognitive difficulties. The register of visual impairment is private and confidential. This means that the information cannot be shared or used in any other way without the prior consent from the individuals to whom the data relates.
- 4.11 The creation of a (new) database on which details relevant to providing individuals with information in accessible formats is stored is proposed. A separate database means that people not registered can be included. Those registered can also choose not to be included.
- 4.12 Information gathered will be stored on a special database for the purpose of sending appropriate information out to those registered on it. The housekeeper of this database will

## **Production of alternative formats**

There are organisations in North Lincolnshire that can provide all the possible alternatives to print referred to above. These are listed in appendix 2.

## **What should be produced in alternative formats?**

- 4.7 It is not intended that everything should automatically be produced in alternative formats. It is not feasible or necessary.

Examples of information that should be produced and distributed automatically include Council Tenancy related items, Social Services information, "Direct" magazine, Council information, personal correspondence, and other relevant community information.

Leaflets freely available at the Local Links should also have an alternative format version available on site.

## **Tourist Information Centres**

- 4.8 Printed guides for main attractions should be available in alternative formats at the TICs. Consideration should be given to providing personal audio descriptions at important sites of interest (appendix 3).

## **Textphones**

- 3.7 There are in excess of 25,000 textphones in use in Britain, most of which are in the homes of deaf people who cannot access standard telephone systems any other way. Using a textphone a deaf person can have a typed conversation (they can also use their voice if they choose to) with another telephone user. The use of a relay system such as Typetalk makes telephone systems even more versatile and accessible .
- 3.8 With adequate training, textphones are relatively straight forward to use and provide direct access for the service user to individual identified services.
- 3.9 Textphones are in place in some locations within the Authority and a register of textphones is currently being collated and will be made available with this guide.

## **Typetalk and BT Text Direct**

- 3.10 Typetalk is the National Telephone Relay Service, run by RNID and funded by British Telecom. It connects a deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind or speech impaired textphone user with a

hearing telephone user via a hearing operator who is in touch with both parties.

- 3.11 By using Typetalk, any deaf person can contact any hearing person - anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Up to 50 operators work at one time.
- 3.12 The Directorate of Social and Housing Services has policies and procedures which enable deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people to obtain textphones for a relatively small charge, subject to them meeting a set criteria.
- 3.13 Anyone can make a call through Typetalk or by using BT Text Direct. By using Typetalk or BT Text Direct a council officer without access to a textphone can return a textphone users call. The operator gives the user all the assistance that is needed to get through the process of having a conversation.
- 3.14 BT Text Direct is accessed by hearing users adding a prefix to the textphone users telephone number eg: 18002 then the district code 01724.

NB: not all textphone users have hearing impairments, some have speech disabilities.

who can not read standard size print due to a visual, physical or cognitive difficulty.

### **Information in Print.**

- 4.6 Print can be made inaccessible by being too small, too indistinct, the wrong colour ink on the wrong colour background, use of an inappropriate font etc. The list is a long one, but the solution is quite simple.

The RNIB guidelines for Clear Print are given in appendix 1, but the main consideration should always be to produce information in a form that the majority of people can access *without* any further enhancement.

### **Information in alternative formats**

- 4.7 The alternative formats identified are:-

Audio, Braille, E-text, Large Print and Moon

When print information requires modification or enhancement it should be produced to a professional standard. There are a variety of e-text formats. Large print needs the font and size determined. Moon has options for numbers. Individuals have a preferred format, which should be offered to them.

4.3 There are 12 key elements in "See It Right", as follows...

1. Information matters;
2. Information for all;
3. Making information accessible to deafblind people;
4. Clear Print;
5. Websites;
6. Handwriting;
7. Videos;
8. Signs;
9. Large print;
10. Braille;
11. Tape;
12. E-text.

4.4 Implementation guidelines accompany this policy guide. They detail how the various proposals can be achieved.

### **North Lincolnshire's Strategy for Action**

4.5 North Lincolnshire Council has an Equal Opportunities in Service Delivery Policy which seeks to ensure its services are accessible to all of the community it serves. This Good Action Guide identifies the specific actions it will take in relation to people who have a print impairment. By print impairment we mean people

### **Deaf Awareness Training**

3.15 A rolling programme of training for members and front line staff has been developed and includes an appreciation of what different forms of deafness exist, the wide variety of causes and effects and the variety of communication needs such as lip reading, finger spelling and sign language.

The training will also consider how we might eliminate discriminatory practices, for example, recognising discriminatory practice within our own behaviour, the phrase deaf and dumb is offensive to deaf people. Raised voices and contorted faces adopted by many hearing people when dealing with a deaf person can and does cause communication problems.

### **Communication Guidelines**

3.16 The following guidelines are taken from Deaf Awareness Training course information.

Ten Golden Rules When Speaking with Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing People:

- 1 Make sure that background noise is at a minimum
- 2 Make sure you have their attention and they are looking at you

- 3 Ideally be between 3 and 6 feet of the person you are speaking to
- 4 Always look at the face of the person
- 5 Make sure that the light is on your face and do not obscure your face or mouth with hands, cigarettes or beard
- 6 Speak normally but more slowly and distinctly
- 7 Do not shout
- 8 Use facial expressions and hand gestures wherever possible
- 9 If a sentence is not heard, do not keep repeating it, but try to rephrase the sentence or confirm by writing information down
- 10 Be patient!

## **Sign Language Interpreters**

3.17 Human Aids to Communication (HAC's) are people who assist communication for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people. They fall into five broad groups:

- Sign language Interpreters (SLI's)
- Lipspeakers
- Communication Support Workers
- Speech to Text Reporters (Palantypists)
- Note Takers

have been treated. Now they have the backing of the law in challenging this treatment, and they no longer have to rely on the goodwill of the company to get the information that they want. Businesses and service providers have to sit up and take note or else they may end up in court." --Catherine Casserley, RNIB legal officer.

The implementation of section 21 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in October 1999 means that there is now a legal obligation to meet the needs of your blind and partially sighted customers. RNIB's See it Right campaign makes information providers aware of the information needs of blind and partially sighted people and offers practical advice on how to meet these needs.

Adopting best practice will help you comply with the law. We want all businesses and organisations to ask themselves: How can I best meet the needs of my blind and partially sighted customers?

Think carefully about how you can say yes before saying no."

(See it Right: RNIB LONDON 2001)

In June 2002 there were 761 registered visually impaired people in North Lincolnshire. Figures from the Office of National Statistics would suggest that a further 2000 are registerable.

## See It Right

- 4.2 The introduction to "See It Right" states ...  
"Information is essential to all of us, to help us to make choices and to live our lives independently. By law, your organisation now needs to provide information in a way that all your customers can read, including customers with sight problems. There are around two million people in the UK with a sight problem. One in fifty people - over one million people - of the two million in the UK with a sight problem could be registered as blind or partially sighted.

Blind and partially sighted people are all individuals. They come from all social and ethnic groups. Some are blind from birth but many lose their sight when they are older. Many blind and partially sighted people have some vision remaining, whilst some can see nothing at all. Some blind and partially sighted people can also have additional disabilities, such as hearing impairments, arthritis or heart conditions. Recognising the diversity of your audience is the key to reaching them".

### **The Disability Discrimination Act.**

"I get calls all the time from blind and partially sighted people who are upset and angry about the way they

- 3.18 British Sign Language (BSL) is the first or preferred language of over 50,000 British people and therefore for these people written and spoken English is their second language.
- 3.19 Documents produced in '**Plain English**' are more accessible to people who's first language is British Sign Language.

### **British Sign Language (BSL)**

- 3.20 BSL uses movement and position of the hands, eyes, face and body to communicate ideas, information, emotions - anything that can be expressed by a spoken language. Sign Language has been used in Britain and elsewhere for hundreds of years.
- 3.21 Appreciation that Sign Language is in many respects no different from any other language and helps break down barriers of misunderstanding that can make deaf people feel excluded from mainstream society.
- 3.22 A Sign Language Interpreter (SLI) is someone who is either qualified as such or registered on a course to qualify as recognised by the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) or its Scottish equivalent (SASLI).

3.23 A Communication Support Worker (someone with lower level qualification than an SLI) can provide vital support that deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people need to communicate on a day to day basis with non-signing people. However they are unlikely to be able to guarantee the degree of interpreting skill that is needed for legal or medical work, or social work where `life and death` decisions involving a deaf person are involved.

3.24 In the council situations someone with a fairly low level of signing skills may be able to pass on small amounts of information, directions, etc., and staff should be encouraged to develop those basic signing skills

3.25 Apart from 1:1 situations, officers and councillors are most likely to come across a professional SLI in the context of a public or council meeting. SLIs are trained to translate - speedily, accurately and completely - what is being said, both from English into British Sign Language (BSL) or Sign Supported English (SSE) and vice versa.

3.26 SLIs registered with CACDP are bound by a Code of Practice and given guidance on rates of pay.

## Improving Communications for People Who Have A Print Impairment

### 4. Introduction

4.1 People with a visual impairment are often faced with limited access to services and information. The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) makes ensuring equality of access a legal responsibility.

**In 1999 the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) published "Get the Message - Making information available for blind and partially sighted people" and ran a campaign in January 2001 called "See It Right".** Their *Clear Print* checklist and the *Large Print* checklist are attached as appendix 1, and should be used as reference materials.

This Good Action Guide draws on "See It Right" for examples of good practice.

North Lincolnshire Council's "vision" promotes the goal of "... ensuring equality in access to services".

could be a 'one-off' distributed via social workers/ senior care managers/ and/or Deaf Club/ Hearing impaired groups locally such as Sounds Right.

Advertised in an existing publication within the local deaf community

Arranging with the local Deaf Club/Hearing Impaired groups for officers to talk about situations which may affect deaf people directly (a number of councils did this for the new Council Tax)

Organise a visit from a Deaf Club or Hard of Hearing group to council offices

- 3.35 This guide is a 'living' document and will need to be up-dated regularly. We welcome comments from anyone who uses it, particularly people with hearing loss. We want to know about the guide's accuracy; usefulness and whether the ideas, guidance and standards contained in it are being followed in practice.

Contact a member of the Improving Communications Group (names and contact details at the end of this leaflet) to make your views known.

The code of practice includes:

- faithful interpreting without addition or omission
- not accepting work, which they believe, is beyond their competence
- keeping the material they interpret confidential
- professional and impartial behaviour

- 3.27 The Council has access to a register of Human Aids to Communication (HACs) through [www.royaldeaf.org.uk](http://www.royaldeaf.org.uk) and this should be available to any main reception point within the Council. A further register of local HACs is being compiled to supplement this.

- 3.28 The procedure for booking a HAC is outlined at the front of the register and whilst we would wish to accommodate an individual's needs it will usually not be possible to provide an interpretation service on demand immediately. Normal practice dictates that an interpreter will require a degree of notice (usually 1-2 weeks).

- 3.29 However, in extreme circumstances, should there be an urgent need to respond immediately, the Social Services Sensory Impairment Team may be able to assist. Where appropriate Directorate/ Department will take responsibility to obtain an interpreter/Human Aid to Communication to complete any work.

3.30 Training for front line staff who wish to learn basic sign language skills is available locally. This can be arranged through the training section.

### **Corporate Complaints Procedure**

3.31 The Council's complaint procedure is being amended. Attempts are being made to make sure it is accessible to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people.

### **Publicity**

3.32 It is essential for the service to be fully utilised that deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people know what is available to ensure equality of access.

The following mechanisms will be used to advertise the service:

### **General Advertising in relation to Access for Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing People**

3.33 A general commitment to access in the Customer Charter  
Hard of hearing and deaf and deafened people to be kept informed

- via local press
- via debate at user forums

- on council room booking forms

Textphone number(s) to be included:

- on appropriate council headed note paper
- on job advertisements
- in council handbooks, leaflets and other publications
- in councils A - Z Guide to Services
- in the council's entry in the telephone directory
- advertisements on posters, in local press, elsewhere
- where appropriate in press releases
- Induction loop systems to be sign posted and advertised
- in their locations
- in connection with meetings
- in council handbooks and other publications
- in a published register of loop locations.

### **Targeted Advertising of Access for Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing People**

3.34 It must not be assumed that people with hearing loss are only interested in `deaf` issues.

Publication of a newsletter to people with hearing loss describing access facilities. This