

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. Purpose

Transport for London (TfL) will make 'reasonable adjustments'¹ to the way it communicates with customers, stakeholders and employees. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Meet all statutory obligations and reflect best practice. TfL has a statutory duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to make information accessible to its customers.
- Remove communication barriers wherever possible, in relation to service delivery, employment practices, internal and external communications.
- Mainstream the provision of accessible communication in TfL's day to day practices.

2. Definitions

In this policy, words and phrases listed below have the meanings set out opposite them:

- TfL is an abbreviation for Transport for London
- The TfL Group means TfL, its subsidiary companies and their subsidiaries
- GLA is an abbreviation for the Greater London Authority

'Accessible information' – is information presented in a format which meets the customer's requirements.

'Alternative formats' – a mechanism used to communicate information to people who are not able to access it through standard print or speech because they have visual, aural or other impairments. Examples of alternative formats include large print, audio, Braille, Easy Read and information provided electronically as emails or on floppy disks.

'Mainstreaming' – is the integration of equalities into policy, development, implementation, evaluation and review.

3. Organisational scope

This policy applies to all bodies and staff comprising the TfL Group. Compliance with this policy is a requirement for all employees of TfL and for all those not directly employed by TfL whose remit requires them to act on behalf of any part of the TfL Group.

¹ As defined by key equalities legislation to avoid unfair discrimination and to overcome any disadvantage in accessing services by disabled people and BAME groups.

4. Policy statement

The T2025 vision for TfL is to create:

'A world class transport system that delivers the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods that enhances London's economy, environment and social inclusion.'

TfL's priority is to create a world-class transport system, which is accessible to all Londoners living in, working in, or visiting London. As far as is reasonable and deliverable, TfL will:

- respond to demand for information and guidance in an appropriate and accessible format;
- allocate appropriate resources to cope with demand for information in alternative formats and languages;
- consult regularly with customers and stakeholders to check that the communication support facilities are meeting their needs;
- advise staff of their obligations under this policy, and provide them with the support required to put it into action, via the *'Good Practice Guidelines'* at the end of this policy

All information prioritised by a TfL department as requiring to be published simultaneously in English and other languages, should be translated into TfL's core languages:

Arabic
Bengali
Chinese
French
German
Hindi
Italian
Gujarati
Greek
Polish
Punjabi
Spanish
Turkish
Tamil
Urdu

This revised list of core languages has been agreed with the GLA, Group E&I and is based on the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and on TfL commissioned research into languages spoken in London².

As suggested in the *'Good Practice Guidelines'* it is not always necessary to provide a full word-by-word translation of a document; an informative summary can be provided if appropriate.

² *'Languages spoken in London Desk research to understand how large organisations communicate with a multi-cultural audience.'* Implications & conclusions for policy ~ March 2007 by Social Research Associates

TfL's statutory duties relevant to social inclusion and the requirement for accessible communications are contained in the provisions of the following Acts:

- Greater London Authority Act 1999
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975

5. Policy content

The policy operates under the following broad principles:

- The core content of information provided in alternative formats or non-English languages should not be of a lower standard than the original.
- There should be no unreasonable delay in receiving information requested in alternative formats or non-English languages.

The principles of accessible communication should also be applied to all regular contact with the public and stakeholders – telephone calls, letters, e-mails, marketing communications, website, intranet, travel information, public meetings, events. 'Good Practice Guidance' on verbal and written communication are included at the end of this policy. These guidelines contain detailed action planning advice for departments.

All Business Unit budget holders will be required to:

- plan effectively for the delivery of accessible communications;
- make allowance in their budgets for the provision of accessible communications;
- incorporate these commitments into the Business Planning process within their Equality and Inclusion objectives;
- advise consultants and contract staff of TfL's expectations in this regard;
- regularly review and monitor the accessibility of their department's communications.

6. Standards and guidelines

In addition to the 'Good Practice Guidelines' (included at the end of this policy) TfL will adhere to the following standards and guidelines in implementing this policy:

- Writing for the Web Guidelines (<http://source.tfl/pdfs/pdf4830.pdf>)
- Plain English Guidelines (<http://source.tfl/pdfs/pdf4819.pdf>)
- Corporate design standards (<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/corporate/media/designstandards/>)
- Group New Media's guidelines on web accessibility
<https://extranet.tfl.gov.uk/newmediatoolkit/standards/accessibility/>
Username: tfl **Password:** webtoolkit

7. Review and monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every two years. It was last reviewed in March 2007.

In addition to Group Marketing Communications monitoring, each department is also required to send the following information on a quarterly basis to Group Marketing Communications, which will assist with future reviews of this policy:

- a list of documents produced in non-English languages, and an analysis of demand for these translated materials;
- a list of documents produced in large print and audio formats, and an analysis of demand for these materials;
- a report on any requests for translated materials that could not be met.

Group Marketing Communications will collate this information, generate an overall analysis of demand, and create an annual activity report with future recommendations.

9. Policy owner

The Director of Group Marketing is the designated owner of this policy.

10. Policy custodian

The Head of Marketing Communications is the custodian of this policy, and will be responsible for ensuring it is updated in line with any legislative changes that may occur.

11. Related TfL policies/documentation

- Consultation Toolkit
- General Policy for New Media and Publishing Communications

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Race Relations Amendment Act (RR(A)A) were passed to ensure that people with physical and learning disabilities, and black and minority ethnic groups, are treated equally in all aspects. Part of the obligation upon public organisations such as TfL is that we must communicate with all customer groups in an inclusive and accessible way, whatever their requirements.

These guidelines have been written to help all TfL departments to meet this objective, to promote good practice across TfL, and to deliver a uniform standard of service to customers.

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1. What is 'inclusive communication'?

Inclusive communication is ensuring that all TfL customers have equal access to information that we provide, in verbal, written or other form.

Customers who would benefit from accessible information and communication include:

- People with sensory needs (visual and hearing)
- People with a speech impairment
- People with mobility/dexterity needs.
- People who only have English as a second language (or can only speak English, not read and write).

These groups all include a large number of older people. Some people have multiple needs. Also, members of minority ethnic groups, foreign language speakers or Welsh speakers are as likely as the rest of the population to have needs that affect their ability to access information in addition to possible language barriers.

The communication needs of all these customer groups can be met by:

- Providing printed information in a number of 'alternative formats', which are detailed in section 3 below. These include large print, audio, Braille, and translated versions of the English-language originals.
- Following good practice guidelines for verbal, handwritten, printed and electronic information.

2. What does inclusive communication mean for my department?

All TfL departments should have a clear understanding of how the requirement for inclusive communication impacts on them.

Group Marketing Communications has its own departmental action plan for inclusive communications, which commits it to publishing TfL's key journey planning and fares information materials in TfL's official list of non-English languages (see page 2 of the policy, above), and also in large print format and audio format (CD).

No other TfL department is required automatically to produce versions of their its documents in non-English languages or non-standard formats. However, they must be prepared to make any piece of information available in non-standard formats as and when requested to do so. When responding to a request for a piece of information in an alternative format or language, your decision should not be based on cost alone, although this will be a major factor. Most importantly, you should ask yourself whether your decision is likely to be viewed as reasonable.

The types of information that are most likely to be requested in these non-English languages and non-standard formats are:

- Information aimed specifically at disabled people and / or Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups.
- Information needed to exercise rights and responsibilities during employment or when using transport services.
- Information needed to receive payments or other services.
- Information of a personal or confidential nature.
- Information that could result in legal consequences or loss of rights if not acted upon.
- Information that seeks a response from the audience.

Ideally, each department should have its own inclusive communication action plan, which should answer the following questions.

- Who has ownership of inclusive communication in your department?
- How will you deal with requests for information in non-English languages and non-standard formats?
- Which budget will fund the production of information in non-English languages and non-standard formats, should they be required?
- How will you enforce and monitor the effectiveness of your department in dealing with requests for non-English languages and non-standard formats?

3. How do I produce information in non-English languages and non-standard formats?

Table 1: Alternative formats and languages: production times and costs

Format	Turn-around time	Cost	Notes
Non-English languages	Two to four weeks after completion of English original	££	<p>If you are a public-facing department, it is good practice to set up a telephone number to handle requests for translated versions of documents you produce. This can be done for you by the translation agency that you decide to use from the list on the following pages. This telephone number can then be included in any public outputs, with a sentence advising people to call it for translation requests.</p> <p>Please be aware that the translation of documents can only begin once the English original has been fully signed off. If appropriate, you can arrange for only a summary of the English language document to be provided. If you are producing a summary, it should be possible to bring all translated information together in a single translated version of the document in question.</p> <p>Whichever of our contracted translation agencies you decide to use, they will require access to editable versions of the English artwork files (Quark, Illustrator, etc.). They cannot work with Word documents or PDF documents.</p> <p>Whether you are providing a summary or the whole of the English document in question, the final translated files should be of the same presentational standard as the original. However, there is no requirement to have the translated files printed professionally – it is acceptable to print the required number of copies on a colour desktop printer. For this reason, it is always a good idea to have the artwork for the translated files set up at A4 size (portrait and landscape are equally acceptable). The translation agency you decide to use will be able to provide however many printed copies you need.</p>

Large print	Same as for English original	£££	<p>There is no standard definition of large print, as no one print size will suit everyone. However, as a standard, all large print documents should try carry text that is minimum of 18 points in size.</p> <p>Wherever possible, large print documents should be formatted in exactly the same way as the standard print version, including visuals, which should be scaled up as required.</p> <p>The design stage can run parallel to that of the standard print version. The unit cost will be higher than standard print because the document will be longer.</p> <p>Large print work can be done either by one of our contracted translation agencies or by your regular design suppliers.</p>
Audio (CD)	Minimum two weeks after completion of English original	££££	<p>In order to create an audio version of any document, you will need to provide a script to the translation agency. It is good practice to break your script down into numbered ‘chapters’, and to list these at the beginning of the CD, to help customers navigate around as easily as possible. The translation agency will record a master copy, which can then be duplicated as many times as you require on CD. Digital recording gives superior quality and can be amended more easily.</p>
Easy Read	At least double the time required for English original	££££	<p>Easy Read is a format that has been specifically developed for people with learning disabilities. It comprises very simple, short sentences of very plain English supported by equally simple illustrations, which help to explain the text. For full guidelines on what Easy Read is and how to use it: www.mencap.org.uk/download/make_it_clear/MakeitClear_EasyReadGuide.pdf. For an example of a TfL document in Easy Read format, see www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/OutaboutguideFINAL.pdf.</p>

Braille	Minimum four weeks after completion of English original	£££	<p>Braille is a system of raised dots that enables visually impaired people read by touch. There are two main forms of braille, Grade 1 is a letter by letter translation, which is used in signs. Grade 2 has dot combinations to represent common letter groups such as “the” and “for”, and is quicker to read than Grade 1.</p> <p>Please be aware that demand for Braille documents is now very low. Audio versions of documents are preferred by the majority of customers with visual impairments. Also, please note that Braille works well for standard printed documents but can not easily translate charts or graphs.</p>
Video	Minimum four weeks after completion of English original	££££	Video is a useful medium for people with low levels of literacy. Videos should include subtitles for people with a hearing impairment.
CD-Rom	Depends on complexity of info being presented	£££££	Interactive CD-Roms can be a highly effective means of communication, combining sound, sign language, text and images.
British Sign Language (video)	10 to 14 weeks after completion of English original	£££££	All BSL outputs should include subtitles and a clear, simple voice-over. Please be aware of the very lengthy production timetable for this format.
Website	Depends on complexity of info being presented	Will vary depending on the size of the job	You should place all requests for new content on the website using the standard Web Job booking form on Source. All of the information that is to be submitted for inclusion should follow the guidelines listed in section six of this document.

Email	Depends on complexity of email	£££	<p>HTML emails should be built according to Group New Media's guidelines on web accessibility and checked by Group New Media https://extranet.tfl.gov.uk/newmediatoolkit/standards/accessibility/ Username: tfl Password: webtoolkit</p> <p>A useful guide to producing accessible plain text email newsletters can be found at: http://www.headstar.com/ten</p>
E-text (Word, PDF, Web content)	Same as for standard English language document	N/A	<p>Providing information in electronic form can be the easiest way to communicate with people who have sensory impairments.</p> <p>Visually impaired people may use a large screen or a programme that enlarges the text on the screen. Since these customers cannot scan the text in the same way a sighted person would, the document needs to be written and designed in a clear and simple manner, so that applications such as Screen Reader are able to read what appears on the screen and convert it into either Braille or speech.</p> <p>Information in 'E-text' formats is only accessible to people with Web access, meaning that it these formats can only ever be part of a wider alternative format strategy.</p>
TalkByText	For regular communication with deaf customers	See RNID	<p>TalkByText is a PC Textphone, which turns any Microsoft Windows PC into a real-time text terminal. For full information, visit the RNID website: www.ictrnid.org.uk/tbtwin.html.</p>

Table 2: Official suppliers of translation and alternative format suppliers to TfL

1. Preferred suppliers	SAP vendor	Services available				
<p>Lionbridge Eaton House Wigmore Place Luton LU2 9EZ</p> <p>Tina Robineau (01582) 706 287 tina.robineau@lionbridge.com</p>	10010250	Written translation	Verbal translation – telephone (24hr)	Verbal translation – face-to-face (24hr)	Audio and large print	British Sign Language
<p>K International Plc Carina Building East Sunrise Parkway Linford Wood Milton Keynes MK14 6PW</p> <p>Sam Brown (01908) 557 916 sam.brown@k-international.com</p>	10009342	Written translation	Verbal translation – telephone (24hr)	Verbal translation – face-to-face (24hr)	Audio and large print	British Sign Language
<p>Language Line Services Swallow House 11-21 Northdown Street London N1 9BN</p> <p>Hella Becker (020) 7520 1424 hella.becker@languageline.co.uk</p>	10002250	Written translation	Verbal translation – telephone (24hr)	Verbal translation – face-to-face (24hr)	Audio and large print	British Sign Language

2. Other suppliers	Services available				
<p>Newham Language Shop 32-36 Romford Road Stratford London E15 4BZ</p> <p>Jaimin Patel (020 8430 3663) jaimin.patel@newham.gov.uk</p>	Written translation	Verbal translation – telephone (24hr)	Verbal translation – face-to-face (24hr)	Audio and large print	British Sign Language
<p>Wessex Translations Ltd Unit 1A, The Premier Centre Abbey Park Industrial Estate Romsey Southampton SO51 9DG</p> <p>Paul Stewart (0870 1669 300) paul@wt-lm.com</p>	Written translation	Verbal translation – telephone	Verbal translation – face-to-face		
<p>National Interpreting Service 61, The London Fruit and Wool Exchange Brushfield Street London E1 6EP</p> <p>David José (020 7655 4655) davidcjose@nisuk.co.uk</p>	Written translation	Verbal translation – telephone (24 hr)			

<p>WORDtrans Forge House Loer Road Forest Row East Sussex RH18 5HE David Arrowsmith (01342 826065) davida@wordtrans.co.uk</p>	<p>Written translation</p>	<p>Audio and large print</p>			
<p>Eldon Bureau 9-11 St. James Street Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 4NF Peter Douglass (0191 232 3623) peter@contractdesign.co.uk</p>	<p>Written translation</p>				
<p>KERN UK Ltd New House Rooms 45/46 67-68 Hatton Garden Manfred Kern (020 7831 5600) kern.london@e-kern.com</p>	<p>Written translation</p>				
<p>Prestige Network 1 Rivermead Pipers Way Thatcham Berkshire RG19 4EP Shawn Khorassani (0870 770 5260) sk@prestigenetwork.com</p>	<p>Written translation</p>	<p>Verbal translation – telephone (24hr)</p>	<p>Verbal translation – face-to-face (24hr)</p>	<p>Audio and large print</p>	<p>British Sign Language</p>

4: Good practice guidelines for laying out standard printed information

The overriding principle is 'keep it simple'. If your initial document is written in plain language, is as concise as possible, and is designed to be as legible as possible, it will be accessible to a greater number of people and may reduce demand for alternative versions.

User-friendly design is simple and uncluttered. The elements such as page layout, headings, photo illustrations and captions should be clearly separated rather than competing with each other.

Typeface

New Johnston is the official typeface of Transport for London, and should be used for all text set in standard or large print sizes. If you do not have the New Johnston family of fonts installed on your PC, or one of your artwork suppliers needs access to them, please contact the corporate design team within Group Marketing Communications, on the 16th Floor of Windsor House.

Text should always be set horizontally. 12 point type is the minimum size recommended for a general audience and 14 point is the minimum size recommended for people with a visual impairment.

Type style

Text set in italics or capitals are usually more difficult to read, since it is harder to recognise word shape if the letters are all set at an angle or the same height. For example,

Easy to read: The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

More difficult to read: *The quick brown dog jumped over the lazy dog.*

More difficult to read: THE QUICK BROWN DOG JUMPED OVER THE LAZY DOG.

For this reason, capital letters in words, titles and the body of text should be avoided wherever possible. They can be used to give emphasis to single words or short phrases (for example, for titles but not to set large blocks of texts).

Italics should be avoided completely as many visually impaired people find them very difficult to read. Use a different weight of text instead to make the text stand out.

Underlining should also be avoided if possible as it makes it more difficult to recognise the shape of the letters and therefore the words.

Word spacing and alignment

There should be a consistent space between each word, do not stretch or condense words or a sentence to fit the line length as this has a major impact on the reader's ability to read the text.

Line length

An ideal line should be between 60 and 70 characters in length, except when using columns. Very long or very short lines have the effect of tiring the eyes and therefore reducing the ease with which they can be read. Long sentences may also affect the ease at which information is understood. Splitting words over lines, by using hyphens, disrupts the reading flow, so should be kept to a minimum.

Line spacing, or 'leading'

The spacing between lines is especially important for visually impaired people. If there is insufficient spacing, the lines are less clearly separated and the eye struggles to find the beginning of each line.

A general rule would be to have at least 1.5 to 2 times the space between words on the line.

Text alignment

The RNIB recommends that all text is **left aligned** as this helps with locating the start and finish of each line:

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

You should always avoid text that is centred or right aligned, as this makes it harder for some readers to understand:

Centred

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Right aligned

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Numbers

If numbers are to be used, ensure that the numbers are distinct, as visually impaired people can easily misread 3, 5 and 8, and occasionally 0 and 6 too.

Navigational aids

Recurring features, such as headings and page numbers, should always be in the same place. These act as navigational aids and help the reader to find information quickly.

Including a list of contents, leaving space between paragraphs and dividing the text up all help to give the eye a break and therefore useful tools in making reading easier.

Contrast

Contrast between the background and the text is extremely important. Research has shown a significant proportion of visually impaired people also have problems with colour perception. People with unaffected colour vision see a sharp contrast between, for example, red and green. This contrast would be far less distinguishable to a person with a visual impairment. Contrast is affected by several factors, which include paper colour, texture, lighting and the size, weight and printing ink used for the text.

As a general rule, contrast dark against light. If using white text on a dark background, ensure the background is dark enough to provide a sufficient contrast. Attention needs to be taken when using white text on a colour background as the text will always appear smaller, this may require the text having to be increased to improve its readability.

When using 'reversed out' text, try to avoid switching between black on white to white on black, as this may be confusing to the eye. Also avoid reversing out on colours, as the contrast between the colour and the text may not be strong enough to make the text easy to read.

Illustrations

Photographs, illustrations and diagrams all aid comprehension and retention of information. People with learning disabilities will benefit particularly from illustrations and, in some cases, the use of symbols.

Photographs should not be too grainy or contain a lot of detailed information, which could be lost to a visual impaired person. The important part of the picture should be obvious and photos should not to be laid over each other, therefore confusing the image. A picture with a dark coloured foreground image, which is set against a light coloured background, will be easier to read.

Text and images

Avoid placing text over images, as this will detract from the text, making it harder to read. Unless an image is completely even in tone, such as a clear blue sky, the text can easily be missed. Where both text and images are used, avoid running the text around the image when it produces a ragged left-hand edge. Images that are placed on the right hand side of the page are therefore more acceptable

Columns

If columns are to be used, make sure they are clearly separated, because if columns are too close together the eye may jump across from one column to the next. If space is limited, use a continuous line between the columns to separate them.

Care should be taken when using pictures in the middle of columns. It can be confusing since the eye has to skip over the picture to find the next line of text. Images should not be relied on as the only source of relief from the text; white space, headings and continuous lines can do this more effectively for a visually impaired reader.

Allowing enough space on forms

Visually impaired people often need a generous amount of space to fill in details that have to be hand-written, as they tend to have larger than average hand writing. 'Tick Boxes' also need to be enlarged. This will benefit people with manual dexterity problems such as arthritis.

Paper type

Avoid glossy papers that reflect light, thereby obscuring the print. This glare will add to the difficulty in reading any text. Choose uncoated paper with a weight over 90gsm. As a general rule, if the text is showing through from the reverse side then the paper is too thin.

Folding

When folding a letter make sure that the creases do not obscure any of the text. If producing bound documents such as books or information leaflets insure that they can be laid flat. The reason for this is that many visually impaired people use scanners or magnifiers, which will only produce a clear image if the item can be placed flat on the screens.

RNIB guidelines

For further guidelines on laying out standard printed information, see the RNIB's 'See It Right' document, which is available in full on-line at the RNIB website: www.rnib.org.uk.

Print checklist

- Is the text size at least 12 point for standard print and 18 point for large print?
- Does the text contrast clearly with the background?
- If the type is reversed out, does it contrast sufficiently with its background?
- Is there enough space between each line of type?
- Is the typeface either semi-bold or bold?
- Are whole sentences written in capital letters? (This should be avoided.)
- Are the numerals clear?
- Are any words split between two lines? (There should not be.)
- Is text unjustified, aligned to the left?
- Are there any uneven gaps between words or letters?
- Is any text centred? (Avoid central alignment except for titles.)
- Are there 60-70 characters per line? (Unless you are using columns.)
- Is there enough space between the columns?
- Does the text follow easily from column to column?
- Is the page layout clear and unfussy?
- Is there a contents list?
- Are page numbers and headings consistent and in the same place on each page?
- Is there a space between paragraphs?
- Is the text set horizontally?
- Have you set text around illustrations? (This can be confusing.)
- If the reader needs to write on the page, is there enough space?
- If there are images, are they clearly defined and easy to read?
- Are the images clearly separated from the text?
- Is the paper matt? (Avoid very glossy paper.)
- Is the paper at a size that is easy to handle?
- Do folds obscure the text?
- Can the document be flattened, so it can be placed under a scanner or screen magnifier?

5: Good practice guidelines for Plain English and editorial style

Plain English benefits everyone, but is essential for anyone with a learning disability and people for whom English is their second language. TfL has a full set of guidelines for writing in Plain English, which can be accessed via Source, at: <http://source.tfl/pdfs/pdf4819.pdf>.

TfL also has a set of editorial style guidelines, which can be accessed via Source, at: <http://source.tfl/HelpAndGuidance/HelpTopics/3325.aspx>. The editorial style guide is not a list of definitions. Instead, it gives guidance on when and how to use abbreviations, punctuation, numbers, TfL branding, and terms related to equality and inclusion. It also indicates when certain words need to be favoured or avoided, as well as when the upper or lower case needs to be used.

6: Good practice guidelines for face to face communication

People with visual impairment

- Provide agendas and background papers in advance of the meeting.
- Whenever you talk to someone who is blind, always introduce yourself just in case they do not recognise your voice.
- Address the person by name. If you do not know their name, a light touch on the arm will indicate who is speaking to them.
- Before you move away, say that you are about to leave. Anyone feels foolish talking to an empty space.
- Ensure lighting is even and there are no pools of light or shadows.

People with hearing impairment

- Provide agendas and background papers in advance of the meeting.
- Arrange seating so participants can see speakers' faces.
- Ensure that the lighting is even and there are no pools of light or shadows.
- Encourage participants to speak clearly and one at a time.
- Do not shout.
- Use plain language and if necessary write down difficult words.
- Never finish sentences for people.
- Keep hands away from mouth.
- Give people time and respect.
- Ensure background noise is kept to a minimum.
- Allow more time for the person to absorb what you said.
- If the deaf person is accompanied by a hearing person or sign language interpreter, avoid conversing only with the hearing personal interpreter and ignoring the deaf person.
- Maintain eye contact with the deaf person rather than the hearing person/interpreter.
- Be prepared to repeat your question or answer.

People with learning disabilities

- Speak clearly and slowly, use plain language.
- Be warm and friendly.

- If necessary use symbol language (known as Makaton).
- Use short sentences.
- Try to stick to one point at a time.
- Don't use jargon or abbreviations/acronyms.
- Address the person directly by name and remember to introduce yourself.
- Be prepared to repeat your question or answer.
- Don't be patronising in language or in tone.
- Don't finish sentences for people.
- Give people time and respect.
- If in doubt, ask the person what suits them or is easiest.

Induction loops

For people who wear hearing aids, induction loops are of great benefit allowing the wearer to hear more clearly what is said. Those people who use hearing aids should set their aids to the 'T' setting to receive transmission. An induction loop should be available at all public meetings, such as consultation forums. Staff meeting rooms should also be able to support a loop system as and when required. All key meeting / boardrooms should have a working induction loop available. These loops should be checked and tested regularly to ensure the equipment is working effectively. Where an induction loop is in use, it is always worth reminding users to speak into the microphone, as people often forget to do so.

Lip reading

People who are deaf or have hearing difficulties may be able to understand spoken information by lip reading. When addressing lip readers, speak clearly and make sure your lips are clearly visible. Avoid exaggerated facial movements, grimacing or inappropriate facial expressions and ensure good lighting is available. Again, do not cover your mouth with hands when speaking and look directly at the individual.

British Sign Language (BSL)

If you are conversing with someone who is profoundly deaf, an appropriate way of communicating is by using British Sign Language. It has its own grammar and cannot be precisely translated into English and written down. A deaf person may bring along an interpreter to translate what you are saying. If not, then they need to be aware that one can be booked. All public meetings should have a sign language interpreter available. It is important to remember to book the interpreter at least four to six weeks in advance.

Sign Supported English (SSE)

This is another system of communication used by deaf people, but it is not as common as BSL. The RNID can assist in finding SSE interpreters.

Palantype

Palantype is a method of machine shorthand used to provide a word for word transcript of meetings. A palantype operator records speech on a special keyboard which then appears on a monitor or screen for the deaf or hard of hearing person to read. The operator records how words sound rather than how they are spelt. The computer changes these coded word sounds back into English and this is what appears on the screen to be read by the user.

Some deaf customers may prefer a Palantypist to be present at a meeting rather than a BSL interpreter. There are not many Palantype operators, so you should book one well in advance of when you need them. To do so, contact the RNID directly: see www.rnid.org.uk for full contact details.

7: Good practice guidelines for telephone communication

When using the telephone many of the same guidelines apply as when communicating with a person face to face. People with a hearing impairment may use textphone or typetalk if they are unable to use the standard or adapted telephone.

Textphones are similar to telephones, but instead of speaking, messages are typed to another Textphone. Textphones are also known by their brand name – ‘Minicom’.

Typetalk is a national telephone relay service operated by British Telecom, which gives people with visual and speech impairments access to the telephone network. The caller dials the specific number and an operator reads the text message to the recipient, whose replies are typed back via the operator’s textphone. This method is not always appropriate for imparting sensitive messages and should only really be used where textphones are not available.

8: Good practice guidelines for handwritten information

It is always better to use word-processed text, but on the occasions when it is necessary to communicate via a hand-written note, the following advice should be followed:

Line thickness

The thickness of handwritten text obviously depends on the individual and the writing implement. Use a medium thick pen for general use, and a thicker pen for addressing an envelope.

Ink type

Felt tipped pens are better than ordinary ink or ballpoint pens, as they usually give a clear, unbroken line.

Contrast

It is important to have good contrast between your writing and the paper you are using. For the best results, use a white or lightly coloured paper and a pen with dark ink.

Appendix: Useful organisations for further information

Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)

105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE

Tel: 020 7388 1266

Fax: 020 7388 2034

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Talking Newspaper Association UK (TNAUK)

10 Browning Road
Heathfield
East Sussex
TN21 8DB

Tel: 01435 866 102

Fax: 01435 865 422

Email: info@tnauk.org.uk

Website: www.tnauk.org.uk

Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD)

18 Westside Centre
London Road
Stanway
Colchester
Essex
CO3 8PH

Tel: 01206 509509

Textphone: 01206 769 755

Fax: 01206 577 090

Website: www.royaldeaf.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)

19-23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL

Tel: 0808 808 0123
Textphone: 0808 808 9000
Fax: 020 7296 8199

Email: informationonline@rnid.org.uk

Website: www.rnid.org.uk

SENSE National Deaf-Blind & Rubella Associations

11-13 Clifton Terrace
Finsbury Park
London N4 3SR

Tel: 0845 127 0060
Textphone: 0845 127 0061
Fax: 020 7272 6012

Email: info@sense.org.uk

Website: www.sense.org.uk

SCOPE

PO.Box 833
Milton Keynes
MK12 5NY

Tel: 0808 800 3333 (including information on Makaton)

Website: www.scope.org.uk

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities

9th Floor, Sea Containers House
20 Upper Ground
London SE1H 9QB

Tel: 020 7803 1100
Fax: 020 7803 1111

Email: fpld@fpld.org.uk

Website: www.learningdisabilities.org.uk

Mind

15-19 Broadway
London E15 4BQ

Tel: 0845 766 0163 (Monday to Friday, 0915 to 1715)

Website: www.mind.org.uk

The Mental Health Foundation

9th Floor, Sea Containers House
20 Upper Ground
London SE1H 9QB

Tel: 020 7803 1100

Fax: 020 7803 1111

Email: mhf@mhf.org.uk

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk