



FROME TOWN COUNCIL

Chapter 13

Accessibility Policy



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Frome
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Date Adopted: June 2008
Version: V01/2008
Review Date: September 2010

A copy of this document is also available in different formats such as large print, Braille, audio or in a different language, please contact the office if this is required.

ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION POLICY AND GUIDANCE

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1.0 Frome Town Council's Policy

This policy provides guidelines to make us as a Town Council accessible to everyone. This includes:

- The whole public
- Staff
- Elected Members
- Partner organisations.

The policy has been written both for staff and elected Members in the Council. The policy has also been written so members of the public can access it. Finally the policy has been written for partner organisations, with the aim of developing future protocols on accessibility that would cut across organisations.

This policy provides an overall framework for people to access us through:

- Printed information
- Electronic information
- Face to face contact
- Telephone

We will cover all areas of access to information including:

- Alternative formats
- Translators
- Interpreters
- Other support for people at meetings.

Our policy aims to make accessible services and information:

- Straightforward
- Part of the Council's day to day work.

1.1 Information is a right

Every member of the public has a right to access our service.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, place a duty on local authorities to publish race and disability equality schemes. This includes making our information accessible to everyone.

The Freedom of Information Act (2005) gives every member of the public a right to request information on any aspect of our work.

This means that people have a right to our information in a language or format that suits them within reason.

1.2 How this will make a difference for the public

Our policy is committed to making information and services available:

- To individuals
- On request
- Without delay
- In alternative formats
- In alternative media.

This applies to everything we produce – letters, emails, leaflets, minutes, and reports.

1.3 Accessibility and Council policies

Our Policy Plan sets out for the public our key goals and our values as a local authority. Promoting ethnic integration and diversity in Frome is one of our key values and this policy helps make us accessible to all.

This policy is part of our approach to equality and diversity. For more information you should read the following:

- Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures
- Policy Against Disability Discrimination
- Statutory Duty to Promote Racial Equality
- Supporting Equality of Opportunity

The Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures recognises six areas of discrimination that need to be eliminated from Frome:

- Race discrimination
- Sex discrimination
- Age discrimination
- Religious discrimination
- Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
- Disability discrimination

In Frome we need to address discrimination in our town. This applies particularly when people want to access information and services.

1.4 Commitment to accessibility

All our new policies must include the following statement at the beginning:

You can get a copy of this document in different formats such as large print, Braille, audio, or in a different language by contacting:



**Frome Town Council, 5 Palmer Street, Frome, Somerset
BA11 1DS**



01373 465 757



e-mail: admin@frome-tc.gov.uk

2.0 Accessing Interpreters and Translators

This part focuses on making services accessible to people whose first language is not written or spoken English.

2.1 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 interpretation services.

Frome Town Council will endeavour to respond within a reasonable time to find a suitable person who can provide an adequate level of interpretation.

2.2 Translators

At any point in time someone may want a document translated into a language other than English.

Due to the low level of request for this service, the Council does not have direct access to translation services and does not as a matter of course translate documents in to languages other than English.

Frome Town Council will endeavour to respond within a reasonable time to provide an adequate level of translation of the documents as requested.

2.3 Confidentiality

Staff should ensure that interpreters sign a written undertaking that they will keep confidential all information being translated or interpreted. A template for this has been attached as an Appendix to this policy.

2.5 Type-talk and text phoning

During 2008 Frome Town Council will look into the possibility of introducing Type-talk and text phoning into its telephone network.

3.0 Accessible Information: Using Plain Language

Plain language is about making sure that everything we write is clear to read.

3.1 Definition of Plain English

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 list what they consider plain language to be:

- 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 Bureau instead of CAB.
- Using words rather than abbreviations or symbols, for example care of, not c/o.
- Keeping sentences and paragraphs short (aim for maximum sentences of 15-20 words).
- Using headings to break up writing.
- Explaining any technical terms you have to use.
- Avoiding long-winded sentences.
- Using the active voice, 'I will eat jelly', rather than the passive voice, jelly 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.

You can find all this at:

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/plainenglishguide.html>

4.0 Accessible Information: Keeping documents clear

Clear print is a design that takes into account a wider audience.

4.1. Type size

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

4.2 Type weight

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

4.3 Typeface

The Council has agreed that we should use Arial minimum font size 12 for day to day use.

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

4.4 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**.

When using white type, make sure the background is dark to provide good contrast.

4.5 Using paper

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. Remember that bold and large text is more like to show through. Choose paper with a minimum density of 90 GSM.

4.6 Type styles

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

4.7 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 sub titles.

4.8 Navigational aids

It is good practice to use number headings and paragraphs in long documents and use a contents list to guide readers to sections and pages.

It is also helpful to place clear page numbers in the same position on each page.

Leaving a space between paragraphs makes reading easier.

4.9 Illustrations

Do not write letters over pictures.

4.10 Watermarks

Do not use a watermark. If a text is a draft, this can be stated in large bold print at the beginning of the document, or the top of each page.

4.11 Large Print

Large print documents must be made available on request.

RNIB defines large print as a minimum font size of **point 16**. Action for

Blind People recommend **Point 16 – Point 22**. It is best to ask people what size they would like, as no single size suits everyone.

With long documents it is best 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.

5.0 Accessible Information in alternative formats

The Council has a responsibility to make available materials in alternative formats.

5.1 Electronic information

Electronically held information can be adapted or translated before being sent out. In some cases readers will have adaptations to their computers so all they will need is an email or CD-ROM.

5.2 Coloured Paper

Printing material in a different colour or onto coloured paper can help some readers with dyslexia. It is important to ask the individual reader what is best for them.

5.3 Audio Tape and CD

When putting information onto tape you should commission a professional firm to do it. A list of organisations is provided in the appendix.

5.4 Braille

Some people prefer information in Braille. Before responding to requests for information in Braille it is important to check that the person would rather have information in Braille than on tape. The appendix gives details of organisations that can translate documents into Braille.

5.5 Translation

Translation is a critical way to make documents accessible to people who read in other languages. All requests for translation must be met in the language requested.

5.6 British Sign Language in Video clips

British Sign Language is recognized by government as a language in its own right and should be treated on a par with Polish, French or any other language. The best way to make documents accessible in British Sign

Language is to pay for an interpreter to sign the document in front of a camcorder. This can then be used as a video, DVD or on a computer.

5.7 Using pictorial information

Many people may find information easier to understand if text is supported by illustrations. These could include:

- Photos,
- Flow charts
- Tables
- Diagrams.

MENCAP provide helpful information on how to make printed information accessible for people with learning disabilities and literacy difficulties:

http://www.mencap.org.uk/download/making_myself_clear.pdf

Key points to remember when illustrating a printed text.

- Make sure the text is in plain language.
- Make sure the font is a large size.

6.0 Frequently Asked Questions

Producing documents

Question 1: What if the document has statistics and diagrams?

If someone has requested a document in tape or Braille, let them know about the statistics and diagrams, and ask if they would like these read out aloud, or translated into Braille. Offer for someone to meet and explain any diagrams or statistics. Lastly if using pictures and diagrams on websites, always make sure that a caption appears when someone hovers a mouse over the picture. If someone is using a text only version, the caption should appear in the text that explains the picture.

Question 2: What if the document is aimed at a broad public?

All documents for general and large-scale distribution should be designed to reach the widest possible audience. It is important to plan for producing them in alternative formats from the very beginning. When planning budgets for documents it is important to build in the costs of translation and conversion to alternative formats.

Question 3: What if the document needs checking for accessibility?

Seek advice from local, regional and national organisations on the accessibility of the document. Also check the document against this policy.

Question 4: Where should copies in translation and alternative formats be available from?

The Town Council Website is a critical place to store information in alternative formats. This can include British Sign Language video clips, as well as documents in other languages. In addition libraries, schools, community centres and targeted voluntary sector organisations can store information in translation and alternative formats.

Appendix 1: National guidance

Disabilities: Accessibility guides

Learning disabilities: Mencap

http://www.mencap.org.uk/html/accessibility/accessibility_guides.asp

Visual impairments/blindness: RNIB

http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public_seeitright.html

Hearing impairments/deafness: RNID

http://www.rnid.org.uk/information_resources/communicating_better/

Plain English: Accessibility guide

Plain English Campaign

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/guides.html>

National provider of tapes and braille

E-Com Communications

152 High Street

Uckfield

East Sussex

TN22 1AT

Contact: Cindy Duchesne

Tel: (01825) 765999

Email: cindy@ecomdda.com

Appendix 2: Somerset Accessibility Organisations

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITY

Black South West Network is a representative and accountable voice for the black and minority ethnic voluntary and community sector in the South West.

Age Groups: All ages **Gender:** 3: Not Specified

Venue Details

Venue Name: Black South West Network

Address: 5 Russell Town Avenue Bristol, Avon. BS5 9LT - [location map](#)

Timetable: 9.00am - 5.00pm Monday - Thursday. 9.00am - 4.30pm Friday.

Main Contact Details

Main Contact: Reception (Support Officer)

Address: 5 Russell Town Avenue, BRISTOL, Avon, BS5 9LT

Phone: 0117 9396648

Fax: 0117 9396648

Email: reception@bswn.org.uk

POLISH COMMUNITY

Somerset Polish Community Association is committed to provide equality support to all Polish speakers who live or work in Somerset and surrounding areas.

Main Contact: Rafal Skarbek (Community Development Officer)

Address: The Labour Club, Unity Hall, Central Road, Yeovil, BA20 1JL

Phone: 07868723419
Email: rafalskarbek@hotmail.com

Disability networks

DISABILITY ADVOCATE - MENDIP

A free, confidential, impartial independent advocacy service, for people aged 16-65 years, on all aspects of physical disability. Offers representation at tribunals, negotiating with third parties, helping to identify the best source of assistance for a particular situation e.g. adaptations to the home or an assessment for a wheelchair. Supports disabled people in exercising their rights.

Main Contact: Sue Page
Address: Mendip Citizens Advice Bureau, Market Place, SHEPTON MALLET, Somerset. BA4 5AG
Phone: 01749 347182

Vision impairment/tape and Braille

ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF THE BLIND BRISTOL - RNIB BRISTOL

Service provision centres around supporting vision impaired people who wish to explore the world of work or retain work following the onset of vision impairment. This includes skill training to overcome the communication barriers presented by not seeing correctly and access to vocational training to enhance entry into the labour market or retain a job.

Age Groups: Adult **Gender:** 3: Not Specified

Main Contact: Administrator
Address: 10 Stillhouse Lane, BRISTOL, Avon, BS3 4EB
Phone: 0117 953 7750
Fax: 0117 953 7751
Email: rnibbristol@rnib.org.uk

SOMERSET ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

SAB is in partnership with Somerset County Council to provide a volunteer visitor service, aids for daily living, living with sight loss courses and courses for carers. Visual Awareness training is also available for individuals and businesses. Braille and audio transcriptions can be undertaken.

Main Contact: Mr Neil Howe (Director)
Address: Northfield House, 51 Staplegrove Road, TAUNTON, Somerset. TA1 1DG
Phone: 01823 333818
Fax: 01823 323566
Email: info@somersetblind.org.uk

Learning disabilities/pictorial

MENCAP - Frome District

Provides information/advice and counselling, with support for carers. Gives talks to groups, schools, etc. Local society visitor for adults: Mr Gerald Franks 01373 461652.

Main Contact: Mr Tony Perry
Address: 3 Orchard Street, FROME, Somerset, BA11 3BX

Phone: 01373 473944

Hearing impairment/BSL

DEAFPLUS SOUTH

deafPLUS is a registered national charity which works with deaf and hearing people to achieve equality.

Main Contact: Kate Harwood / Arthur Moughton

Address:

Phone: 01935 415880

Email: south.west@deafplus.org

SOMERSET TOTAL COMMUNICATION

STC aims to make a positive practical difference in people's lives through a shared common language. Uses tools, including spoken/written words, signing, symbols, video and computer technology etc to empower people to control their lives. Various levels of accessing skills depending on need.

Address: Somerset Total Communication, c/o Resources for Learning, Parkway, Bridgwater, Somerset. TA6 4RL

Phone: 01278 444949

Fax: 01278 447114

Email: stc@somerset.gov.uk

Appendix 3: Template for Confidentiality Agreement with interpreters and translators

Interpreter's /Translator's name:

I have read Frome Town Council's protocol set out in the Accessible Information Policy.

I agree to keep confidential anything I hear or see when working as an interpreter or translator for Frome Town Council or anyone engaging with the council.

Signed

Date

APPENDIX 4

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FROM THE PLAIN ENGLISH CAMPAIGN

Before and after Here are some examples of long-winded official writing with our alternatives.

Before

High-quality learning environments are a necessary precondition for facilitation and enhancement of the ongoing learning process.

After

Children need good schools if they are to learn properly.

Before

If there are any points on which you require explanation or further particulars we shall be glad to furnish such additional details as may be required by telephone.

After

If you have any questions, please phone.

Before

It is important that you shall read the notes, advice and information detailed opposite then complete the form overleaf (all sections) prior to its immediate return to the Council by way of the envelope provided.

After

Please read the notes opposite before you fill in the form. Then send it back to us as soon as possible in the envelope provided.

Before

Your enquiry about the use of the entrance area at the library for the purpose of displaying posters and leaflets about Welfare and Supplementary Benefit rights, gives rise to the question of the provenance and authoritativeness of the material to be displayed. Posters and leaflets issued by the Central Office of Information, the Department of Health and Social Security and other authoritative bodies are usually displayed in libraries, but items of a disputatious or polemic kind, whilst not necessarily excluded, are considered individually.

After

Thank you for your letter asking for permission to put up posters in the library. Before we can give you an answer we will need to see a copy of the posters to make sure they won't offend anyone.

The following hard copy attachments are also available as electronic PDF files. The documents are copyright of the Plain English Campaign.

- **How to write in plain English**
- **The A to Z of alternative words**
- **How to write reports in plain English**