Guide to Creating Accessible Print Publications

(taken from gov.uk guidance on accessible communication formats)

Introduction

It is a legal requirement that documents published on a public sector website are accessible from 23 September 2020.

Any documents published on Glasgow City HSCP internet and intranet websites must meet accessibility standards. This means everyone should be able to get the same information, including those with disabilities. Documents include Adobe Acrobat PDFs, Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint documents, as well as printed publications that are available online.

This guidance covers the main things you can do to create accessible print publications. This includes strategies and plans that are also available in print format.

Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 came into force on 23 September 2018. The Regulations require that public sector websites and mobile apps be made more accessible to all users, especially those with disabilities. This includes all their design, coding and content. The Regulations build on existing obligations to people who have a disability under the Equality Act 2010, where all UK service providers must consider reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

Websites (including intranet) and mobile apps will meet the newer legal requirements if they:
- meet the international WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standard and
- publish an accessibility statement that explains how accessible the website or mobile app is.

Content and Layout Guidance

Follow the steps below to create accessible print publications.

If you have any questions, contact GCHSCP_Communications@glasgow.gov.uk

1. Clear print

Clear print standards help to maximise the legibility of print publications and should therefore be used for all printed materials. It can be particularly helpful for people who have visual impairments or dyslexia. Clear print is not the same as large print. As well as font size, the relationship between the visual height of characters and the surrounding white space is important.

2. Fonts

The clear print standard requires a minimum font size of 12 point. However, you may wish to user a larger font depending on your audience. Using a point size of 16 means that there is no need to have a separate stock of large print documents. You should also be able to supply large print in various sizes above 16 point, on request. Density and complexity of font type can reduce space – look for a simple font that spaces letters out.

Avoid italics, underlining, simulated handwriting, unusual shaped letters and decorative typefaces.

Consider the length of letters b, d, f, h, k, l, t, g, j, p, q, y in relation to the x height of the typeface. Short ascenders and descenders make a typeface less legible.

Fonts with uneven stroke widths tend to be less legible than fonts with even strokes.

Consider individual characteristics of letter shapes. For example, a closed 'a' is more likely to be confused with a 'c' or an 'o' than an open 'a', and a '3' can be confused with an '8' in some fonts.

Research your audience's preferences – consider user-testing your font with a range of impairment and age groups.

3. Type Weight

Lighter type weights can affect legibility, as readability requires good contrast. Bold or semi-bold weights are recommended for material specifically for people with visual impairments – but check the font is still easy to read.

Avoid using blocks of capital letters in titles or body text.

4. Design and Layout

The best design is simple and uncluttered.

Set text horizontally, not on a slant.

Align text left for maximum legibility. Avoid right aligning or justifying text.

Keep line lengths to between 60 and 70 characters, roughly 12 to 18 words, per line.

Avoid using hyphens to split words between lines.

Allow plenty of space on forms. If details that have to be hand-written, make the boxes, including tick boxes, as large as possible.

Make sure that sections and chapters are clearly defined with headings.

Keep headings and page numbers in the same place on each page.

Keep paragraphs short and use line spacing between paragraphs. Use wide margins and headings. Boxes can help emphasise or highlight important text.

Include a contents page and consider including an index.

Tints can be helpful to break up a document and make it easier on the eye, particularly for statistical material, graphs and charts. Make sure there is a strong contrast between text and tint.

When setting text in columns, make sure the space between the columns clearly separates them.

5. Numbers

Make sure numbers are distinct when printed. The numbers 3, 5 and 8 can be misread, as can 0 and 6 in some fonts. For financial information use a large point size.

6. Images

Images can help communicate your messages. They also provide relief to the eye.

All online images need [alternative text](#) (alt text). If you use an image to convey information that is essential to understanding the page content – for example, a diagram that explains something – include alt text that gives screen reader users the same information. If an image is purely decorative or is explained in the text on the page, use empty alt text – indicated by "" (a pair of double quotes with no space). Make illustrations and photographs as large as possible without being grainy.

Avoid:

- using photos that contain a lot of detail or in which the foreground and background are not well contrasted
- putting text over images and
- fitting text around images if this means lines of text start in a different place.

7. Graphs and Diagrams

Explain graphs and diagrams in words.

8. Posters, Boards and Leaflets

On posters, boards and leaflets:

- keep the design simple
- avoid background graphics that make text difficult to read
- keep essential information, for example event details, grouped together and

- use lower case rather than capitals.

9. Contrast and Colour

Contrast dark type against a light background as a general rule. Black type on off-white or yellow paper gives a good contrast. Avoid using colour alone to convey information because some people may be unable to distinguish between the colours. Some people have difficulty distinguishing between red and green in particular. Others find light text on a dark background difficult to read.

10. Reversing Type (White Out)

Some people prefer white text on a black background as it reduces glare from the page. If using white type, make sure that the background colour is dark enough to provide a good contrast.

Note that:

- when printing it can sometimes be very difficult to provide dense ink coverage on coloured surfaces
- white text on a coloured background appears smaller – you may need to increase the font size and use a bold typeface and
- switching between black on white and white on black can be confusing and tiring to the eye.

11. Paper

Use cream or off-white non-glossy paper to reduce glare.

Use uncoated paper weighing over 90gsm (photocopy paper usually weighs 80gsm).

If the text is showing through from the reverse side, the paper may be too thin.

Very large or very small documents can be difficult to handle. A4 size is generally the most user-friendly.

When folding paper, avoid creases that obscure the text. People who use scanners or screen magnifiers need to place the document flat under the magnifier, so take care about the number of pages in your document and the binding methods you choose.

The binding method needs to be appropriate to the layout and the number of pages. For large documents, particularly large print formats, a ring-bound binding can help readability.