Making your information accessible

Guidelines for transport providers

imtac

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1   Introduction

Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

Our aim is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Regional Development.

2   Why accessible information is important

Older people and disabled people experience barriers to accessing everyday services such as transport. These barriers are just not about physical access to vehicles and buildings. For many people not being able to access information in a way that is accessible to them can mean that the service is not accessible.

The business case

Disabled people are a significant proportion of the population in Northern Ireland. Statistics indicate that over 20% people in Northern Ireland are disabled. In addition there are currently around 300,000 people living in Northern Ireland in receipt of the state pension. By not making information accessible transport providers may be missing out in a lucrative market.

The legal case

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 means that disabled people now have rights in relation to accessing goods and services. This includes the provision of information. Since 1999 service providers have had a legal obligation to ensure that their information is made accessible.

Case study

The Disability Rights Commission details examples of cases successfully taken by disabled people under the DDA. Below is a brief outline of a case involving the failure of a service provider to provide accessible information:

Summary: The client is visually impaired and required documents in large font size print. He contacted a charity on two occasions asking for forms to be sent to him in large print and was told this was not possible. As a result he was unable to use the services of the charity which had implications for his future career. The DRC issued proceedings and entered into negotiations with the charity.

Interest: An example of a service provider clearly failing to meet its legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments, the case deserves support for this reason and the fact it falls within a priority area for the Commission, namely Part III DDA cases.

Outcome: The claim settled to client's satisfaction on payment by the charity of £1500, an apology and an agreement to amend its policies to improve access to its services for all disabled people.

There are clear business and legal reasons for making information about your services accessible. Providing accessible information using good design principles will also benefit all your customers through providing a clear message about your services.

3 Printed Information

Much of the available information about transport services is printed. It is important to follow inclusive design principles with any printed information in order to maximise accessibility to your customer.

The following are key considerations:-

Contrast :   Type and paper colour should contrast. Black on white or black on yellow are considered best

Type Size: A type size of 14 pt is recommended

Font: Avoid bizarre, indistinct or ornate fonts – Arial is considered good

Spacing: Stick to even spacing and leave adequate space between text and columns – do not stretch or condense text to fit

Line length: Should ideally be in the range of 50-65 characters

Paper: Avoid glossy or thin paper as these can be harder to read

Capital letters: Avoid words in capitals – these are harder to read

Other design Issues: Keep page layout clear and simple

Space paragraphs and columns

Do not wrap text around pictures

Avoid putting too much information in limited material

Follow plain language guidelines in designing written information

When using images in printed material it is important to use positive images of disabled people and older people using your services. You should also include details of any particular services you provide for older people and disabled people. You should include a prominent statement about the availability of your information on alternative formats on all your printed material.

There are specific guidelines available for the design of timetables or other transport relation information published by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC). Further details of how to obtain this publication are included on page 24.

4   Websites

Websites are an increasingly important means of communication. It is essential that you incorporate accessible design standards into your website. This is best done at the earliest stage of design or redesign. There are two key sources of guidance that should be incorporated into your website application.

The definitive technical guidelines for accessible web design are published by the Web Accessibility Institute (WAI), part of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). These guidelines are available on the web at www.w3.org. The guidelines consist of 14 basic statements, each of which is broken down into a number of more specific "checkpoints" which are designated as priority one, two or three. In conjunction with their guidelines, the WAI define three standard of accessibility.

'A'   The most basic standard. A site must comply with all of the priority of checkpoints to achieve this standard

'AA'   A higher standard than the single 'A' standard. Sites must comply with all of the priority one and two checkpoints to achieve this standard

'AAA'   A high standard of accessibility. Sites must comply with all priorities of one, two and three checkpoints to achieve this standard

Guidance published by the British Standards Institute in conjunction with the Disability Rights Commission again stresses the importance of the technical accessibility of websites. However, these guidelines also place an emphasis on the usability of the website. The guidance recommends the design and ongoing development of websites should include user testing involving disabled people with a range of impairments.

If you provide particular services for disabled people or older people information should be provided on your website. This information should be able to be accessed from a prominent link on your homepage. As with printed material, if you include images on your website you should include positive images of older people and disabled people using your services.

5   Telephone Services

Most transport providers offer a telephone information service of some sort. It is essential that you make this service accessible to disabled people. You should ensure the following:-

- Members of staff who answer telephones should receive disability equality training delivered by an experienced disabled trainer

- Members of staff who answer the telephone should be knowledgeable about your services including any particular services offered to disabled people and older people

In addition to the above if you provide a telephone service you should provide an alternative for people who cannot use, or have difficulties using, telephones. You should advertise details of all of the following methods of contacting your organisation:-

- A fax number

- A website and email contact address

- A textphone number or details of the typetalk service

- A sms text service

Textphones

Textphones enable deaf people to communicate via a keyboard and small visual display connected to a phone line. Textphones are relatively inexpensive, prices starting at around £250. If you provide a textphone, staff should be trained on how to use it

Typetalk

If you cannot offer a textphone you can recommend that deaf people and people who are hard of hearing people can contact you using Typetalk. Typetalk is a service that enables textphone users to communicate using ordinary phone lines via an operator.   Typetalk is run by the RNID and funded by BT. For more information freephone 0800 73 11 888.

Textphone users dial direct using the prefix 18001 before the number of the person they wish to speak to and a Typetalk operator joins the line to relay the conversation. Similarly by using the prefix 18002 a hearing person can call someone with a textphone.

Sms services

Many deaf people and hard of hearing people now use mobile phones to communicate. Introducing an SMS text information service would not only benefit deaf customers but given the prevalence of their use would benefit all your customers.

6   Other Information Services

Booking/ticket offices and information desks

Under the DDA you must ensure that these services are accessible. The following should be included in these areas:-

• A textphone

• A loop system

• If safety glazing is used this should be non reflective and the areas should be evenly lit

• A section of low level counters accessible to wheelchair users, people of short stature and children

In addition staff working at these parts should receive disability equality training delivered by an experienced disabled trainer.

Complaints and feedback services

As a service provider you should also have complaints/feedback procedures. You must ensure that disabled people can access these services.

You should provide a postal address, telephone, textphone, fax and email contact for feedback. You should dedicate a member of staff to deal with feedback issues who should receive disability equality training from an experienced disabled trainer.

Broadcast and video

If you are producing visual information for broadcast or for video you should ensure as a minimum that this incorporates subtitles and voice over narration. You should also consider producing it with a sign language insert. Accommodating each during planning will reduce costs considerably.

7   Accessible formats

Accessible formats statement

Alongside well designed printed information, an accessible website and accessible telephone services you have an obligation to provide information in additional formats that are accessible to some disabled people. All your material, including printed and websites should carry a clear statement about the availability of formats.

Imtac uses the following statement:

"This document is available in alternative formats, please contact Imtac to discuss your requirements"

You may want to include some of the formats below as examples of what you can provide. However, you cannot be prescriptive about the formats you do supply – it is up to the service provider to respond to the requests from the individual.

Planning ahead

It is important that you plan ahead to ensure that you can respond quickly to requests for information in alternative formats. Producing everything in the range of formats listed below will be expensive and unnecessary unless you know you will receive requests in a format. It makes more sense to be in a position to produce an accessible format quickly on request. For example a transcribing service can produce a master copy of information on audio – further copies can then be run off quickly to meet demand. Similarly if a producer of Braille has a copy of information in advance requests for this format can be produced on demand.

The following is a summary of some of the main formats you will be asked for.

Large Print

Large print may make information more accessible to some people with a visual impairment. The design guidelines for printed materials apply, however, the print size used should be between 16 and 20 pt. Anything above 20pt may be difficult to read.

Tactile Alphabets

Braille and Moon are both tactile alphabets used by blind people. Braille would be more popular but is still used by relatively few blind people. Braille printers can be

purchased but it is more practical and cost effective to let an outside agency do this work.

Audio

Audio information may be helpful to people with a visual impairment or people with a learning disability. It is important that audio information itself is well designed. Thought should be given to breaking up information on audio rather than having long continuous periods of speech. For this reason this work is best undertaken by a transcribing service rather than in house.

Traditionally audio has involved transcribing information on to tape. However, with digital technology new products have been made available including DAISY disc. More information about DAISY is available from RNIB (contact details on page17).

Electronic

With the widespread use of personal computers you will receive requests for electronic versions of information either as an email attachment or on a computer disc. You should be able to provide this information in the electronic format preferred by the individual for example PDF or Word documents.

Easy Read

For people with a learning disability accessing information can be particularly difficult. Mencap and other organisations offer service providers guidance which will help make your information easy to understand or use. Imtac has produced a number of "Easy Read" documents which are available on the publications section of our website.

8   Using Plain Language

What is Plain Language?

Plain language does not mean patronising baby talk – it simply means things are written in way that is easily understood and impossible to be misunderstood.

Why use Plain Language?

Using plain language means people are more likely to read your material and understand your message. In the long term this will save your organisation money. Customers will also view your organisation as "people friendly".

Items written using plain language will also be easier to translate on to alternative formats.

Using Plain Language

Firstly plan your document carefully. Think about what you want to say and the best way to say it.

Make the structure of the document easy to read and understand. For instance

- Try to give your main message at the start

- Provide navigational aids to steer people through the text

- Use bullet points rather than long sentences

- Use informative headings

- Use short sentences and paragraphs

- Illustrations, cartoons and pictures can help people's understanding of a document and make the document more attractive

- Repetition can be important in getting your message across

When writing text you should

- Avoid too many ideas in one sentence

- Avoid abbreviations and jargon

- Be direct and use the active voice

- Repeat key words

- Avoid ambiguity

- Avoid negatives

9   Targeting Your Information

Having produced information that is accessible to the widest audience you should ensure that disabled people and older people are aware of your services. Do not rely on word of mouth to promote your services. The best way to do this is to develop an action plan to promote and distribute your accessible information. You should include this in your standard marketing or communication strategy.

Here are some tips for inclusion in your action plan. It is likely that a successful action plan will involve a combination of most if not all of these tips – relying on a single aspect will not succeed:

- Advertise the availability of alternative formats in all your literature – including your website

- Advertise any particular services or facilities you have for disabled people and older people in all your literature including your website

- Ensure that all members of staff have received disability equality training delivered by an experienced disabled trainer and are knowledgeable about the services and facilities available to disabled people.

- Make contact with local representative and voluntary organisations for advice. There may be a charge for some forms direct assistance.

- Try to make contact directly with disabled people and older people – take time to visit groups, listen to their needs and explain your services

- Look into using specialised publications, such as Talking Newspapers, which are directly used by disabled people

- Target information to carers organisations

- Target information at sheltered accommodation and other service providers likely to be used by disabled people and older people – day centres, doctors surgeries, social services offices, benefit offices, post offices etc.

- Rather than providing music while telephone calls are on hold why not provide a message about the availability of accessible information

10 Useful services

A number of organisations provide services which may assist you in providing accessible information.

<u>The RNIB</u>

The RNIB provides a range of services including audio transcription, Daisy disc and Braille transcription. You can also access advice based around RNIB's "See it Right" guidance.

Contact:

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
40 Linenhall Street
Belfast
BT2 8BA

Telephone: 028 9032 9373
Fax: 028 9027 8119
Email: rnibni@rnib.org.uk
Website: www.rnib.org.uk

<u>Maghaberry Braille Unit</u>

Maghaberry Prison has a unit that can transcribe your information into Braille.

Braille Unit Workshops
HMP Maghaberry
Old road
Lisburn
Co Antrim   BT28 8PT

Telephone: 028 9261 4550
Email: maghaberrybraille@hotmail.com

Visual Access NI

Visual Access NI offers a transcribing service for Braille, audio and Daisy. They also provide advice and support around information issues for people with a visual impairment.

Contact:

Visual Access NI
Unit 6
North City Business Centre
2 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast
BT15 2GG

Telephone: 028 9075 5005
Email: mail@visualaccessni.co.uk
Website: www.visualaccessni.co.uk

Mencap Accessibility Unit

The Unit can assist organisations make information more accessible to people with a learning disability and can produce information in an easy read format.

Contact Estelle Bloom

Telephone: 020 7696 5551
Email: accessibility@mencap.org.uk
Website: www.mencap.org.uk/html/accessibility/accessibility_services.asp

Organisations providing Disability Equality Training

The Omnibus Partnership
PO Box 148
BANGOR
BT20 4AN

Telephone: 028 9145 6507
Textphone: 028 9158 6974
SMS Text: 078 0621 1564
Emai: omninc@mac.com

Plain language

For information about producing information in plain language contact:

Plain English Campaign
PO Box 3
New Mills
High Peak
SK22 4QP

Telephone:	01663 744409
Fax:	01663 747038
Email:	info@plainenglish.co.uk
Website:	www.plainenglish.co.uk

Disability Discrimination Act

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP

Telephone:	028 9050 0600
Textphone:	028 9050 0589
Fax:	028 9033 1544
Enquiry Line:	028 9089 0890
Email:	information@equalityni.org
Website:	www.equalityni.org

11 Other organisations

Asking disabled people and organisations representing disabled people about your information is an important way of assessing the effectiveness of your information. Listed below are local organisations best placed to provide information and advice.

<u>Transport related</u>

Imtac
Portside Business Park
Airport Road West
Belfast
BT3 9ED

Telephone: 028 9029 7885
Textphone: 028 9029 7885
Fax: 028 9029 7881
Email: info@tacni.org.uk
Website: www.imtac.org.uk

<u>Pan-Disability Organisations</u>

Disability Action
Portside Business Park
Airport Road West
Belfast
BT3 9ED

Telephone: 028 9029 7880
Textphone: 028 9029 7882
Fax: 028 9029 7881
Email: hq@disabilityaction.org
Website: www.disabilityaction.org

People who are deaf or hard of hearing

RNID (NI)
Wilton House
5 College Square North
Belfast
BT1 6AR

Tel/Textphone:	028 9023 9619
Textphone Answerphone:	028 9031 2033
Fax:	028 9031 2032
Videophone :	028 9043 8354
Email:	info.nireland@rnid.org.uk
Website:	www.rnid.org.uk

People who are blind or visually impaired

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
15 Sandown Park South
Belfast
BT5 6HE

Telephone:	028 9047 1453
Fax:	028 9065 5097
Email:	belfast@gdba.org.uk
Website:	www.gdba.org.uk

People who are Deafblind

Sense
The Manor House
51 Mallusk Road
Mallusk
BT36 4RU

Telephone:	028 9083 3430
Textphone:	028 9083 3430
Fax:	028 9084 4232
Email:	nienquiries@sense.org.uk
Website:	www.sense.org.uk

<u>People who have a Learning Disability</u>

Downs Syndrome Association
Graham House
Knockbracken Healthcare Park
Saintfield Road
Belfast
BT8 8BH

Telephone:	028 9070 4606
Fax:	028 9070 4075
Email:	downs.syndrome@cinni.org
Website:	www.dsa-uk.com

Mencap
4 Annadale Avenue
Belfast
BT7 3JH

Telephone:	028 9069 1351
Fax:	028 9064 0121
Information Service:	0845 763227
Email:	mencapni@mencap.org.uk
Website:	www.mencap.org.uk

The Orchardville Society
Lagan Village Tower
144-152 Ravenhill Road
Belfast
BT6 8ED

Telephone:	028 9073 2326
Fax:	028 9073 2328
Email:	info@orchardville.com
Website:	www.orchardville.com

<u>Older People</u>

Age Concern Northern Ireland
3 Lower Crescent
Belfast
BT7 1NR

Telephone:	028 9024 5729
Fax:	028 9023 5497
Email:	info@ageconcernni.org
Website:	www.ageconcern.co.uk

Help the Aged
Ascot House
Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DB

Telephone:	028 9023 0666
Fax:	028 9024 8183
Email:	infoni@helptheaged.org.uk
Website:	www.helptheaged.org.uk

<u>Carers Organisations</u>

Carers Northern Ireland
58 Howard Street
Belfast
BT1 6PJ

Telephone:	028 9043 9843
Fax:	028 9032 9299
Email:	info@carersni.org

12 Useful Publications

1   The Informability Manual: Making information accessible in the light of the Disability Discrimination Act by Wendy Gregory.

Published by HMSO. Price £25. Available from Stationary Office bookshops, PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522.

2   Getting It Right – including disabled people in communication and consultation

Published by the Local Authorities Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA), 9 Cortland Road, Nunthorpe, Middlesborough, TS7 0JX. Tel 01642 316576 or see www.laria.gov.uk. Price £30.

3   The Legibility of Timetables, Books and Leaflets

Available, free of charge, from the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, 1/14 Great Minister House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR. Tel. 020 7944 8011, Fax. 020 7944 6988, text. 020 7944 3277 or email dptac@dtlr.gov.uk

4   Inclusive Mobility: A guide to best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure

Available free of charge from the Mobility Unit, Department for Transport, Great Minister House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR. Tel. 020 7944 5281 or fax. 020 7944 6102

5   See it Right

12 booklets published by the RNIB on making information accessible to blind and visually impaired people. For more information go online at www.rnib.org.uk/seeitright/welcome.htm#3 or use the contact details for RNIB on page 15.

6   Am I Making Myself Clear

Advice on making your communication more accessible to people with a learning disability published by Mencap. These guidelines are available online at www.mencap.org.uk/html/accessibility/accessibility.asp or by using the contact details on page 20.

7   Making your Website Accessible for People with a Learning Disability

Guidelines for website designers published by Mencap. These guidelines are available online at www.mencap.org.uk/html/accessibility/accessibility.asp or by using the contact details on page 20.

8   Guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites

Published by the British Standards Institute in conjunction with the Disability Rights Commission. These guidelines are available online at www.equalityhumanrights.com.

9   Producing information for deaf and hard of hearing people

Published by RNID. Full contact details for the RNID are available on page 19.

13   Contacting us

This publication is available in alternative formats. If you require an alternative format or have any other queries please contact us at:

Imtac
Portside Business Park
189 Airport Road West
Belfast
BT3 9ED

Telephone	028 9029 7885
Fax	028 9029 7881
Textphone	028 9029 7885
Email	info@tacni.org.uk
Web	www.imtac.org.uk