



# Accessible Information: Policy and Guidance

**In the context of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000),  
the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) and the Equality  
Standard for Local Government (Best Value Performance  
Indicator 2)**

**Issued: May 2006  
Issued by: The Equality Officer**

**01228 606639**

**[equality@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:equality@cumbriacc.gov.uk)**

You can get a copy of this document in different formats such as large print, Braille, audio, or in a different language by calling 01228 606060.

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## **Contents**

<b>1.0 Cumbria County Council's Policy</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>2.0 Accessing Interpreters and Translators</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>3.0 Protocol on using Interpreters and Translators</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>4.0 Accessible Information: Using Plain Language</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>5.0 Accessible Information: Keeping Documents Clear</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>6.0 Accessible Information in Alternative Formats</b>	<b>Page 16</b>
<b>7.0 Frequently Asked Questions</b>	<b>Page 18</b>
<b>Appendix 1: National Guidance</b>	<b>Page 19</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Providers of Accessible Information</b>	<b>Page 20</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Cumbrian Accessibility Organisations</b>	<b>Page 21</b>

## **1.0 Cumbria County Council's Policy**

This policy provides guidelines to make us as a County 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 organizations, with the aim of developing future protocols on accessibility that would cut across organizations.

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.

This policy provides an overall framework. Some of our services will require a more robust approach. Where this is the case the appropriate Directorate Equality Group should develop more detailed guidance, based on this guidance.

Finally this policy replaces the Accessible Information Policy from 2000.

## **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.

## **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
- Via translators and interpreters
- 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 Council Plan sets out for the public our key goals and our values as a local authority. Promoting diversity in Cumbria 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 (2004)
- Equality Implementation Strategy (2006)
- Revised Race Equality Scheme (2006).

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

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

In Cumbria we need to address discrimination in our rural and urban settings. This applies particularly when people want to access information and services.

All our equality and diversity policies are about making our promises work for everyone. This means making our Council Plan a document for everyone.

By December 2006 we will publish the Cumbria Equality Scheme. This scheme will support the Council Plan, by making sure that our public commitments are backed up by accessible services and information.

#### **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 calling 01228 606060**

The statement must be translated into the following languages:

- Portuguese
- Bengali
- Cantonese
- Polish
- Lithuanian
- Turkish

A word document with this statement in all six languages is now available, and can be copied and pasted. Contact the Equality Officer if you would like a copy of the translations ([equality@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:equality@cumbriacc.gov.uk), 01228 606639).

## 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.

### 2.2 How to get an interpreter

We subscribe to the National Register of Public Sector Interpreters. This is a database which searches for interpreters by:

- Language
- Region/county
- Qualification
- Area of local authority expertise
- Type of security check.

If you are a member of staff or an elected Member, and you need an interpreter, you should immediately send your request to the County Council Equality Officer ([equality@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:equality@cumbriacc.gov.uk), 01228 606639). Where an interpreter is found, it is up to you to contact them and for your service to pay.

### 2.3 Continued contact with an interpreter

Where you have contact with an interpreter, there is no need to route every request through the Equality Officer. However all requests must be copied to the Equality Officer. This way we can:

- Monitor requests for interpreters.
- Check for key languages, issues, localities and services.
- Use data to inform policy, and partnership working.
- Keep track of the changing patterns of languages spoken in the county.

### 2.3 Accessing a British Sign Language interpreter

British Sign Language (BSL) is now recognized a language in its own right. The Cumbria Deaf Association provide an interpreting service. They can be contacted on 01228 606434.

Requests for BSL interpreters need to be copied to the Equality Officer for monitoring purposes.

### 2.4 Language Line

We also subscribe to Language Line. This is a service that provides telephone based interpretation.

All Directorates have access to Language Line, which they can use if someone rings up who does not speak English, or finds it easier to communicate in their first language. The Council pays centrally for the license and Directorates pay for use of the service. Language Line produces statistical information on service use that can be broken down to directorates.

When using Language Line you ring **0845 310 9900**, then quote your ID code (if you do not know please contact the Equality Officer who has them all). Then you will be put through to a telephone interpreter.

Directorate Equality Groups will promote language line within Directorates. Language Line (020 7520 3419) also produce training CD's and will provide face to face training for groups on request. Any training request should go through the Equality Officer.

Language Line also provide dual handset telephones, this allows two people to speak to a third person over the phone without going onto loud speaker. If you want a dual handset for your service please contact the Equality Officer.

All requests to the Equality Officer about Language Line can be sent to [equality@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:equality@cumbriacc.gov.uk)

## **2.5 Type-talk and text phoning**

The Cumbria Deaf Association recommend we use TypeTalk for initial enquiries. Staff doing more intensive work with text phone users should consider use of their own text phone rather than TypeTalk.

The number for TypeTalk is 18001 followed by the number being called.

## **2.6 Translators**

At any point in time someone may want a document translated into a language other than English. Costs for translations should be met by the service that is providing the information in the first place.

Appendix 3 provides a list of organizations that specialize in providing translations. The Equality Officer will review this list on an annual basis.

These organizations can provide a proof reading service for a small extra charge. Often this means a second translator reviewing what the first translator has written. For quality we recommend proof reading of translated texts before they are sent to the person who has requested them.

Services are responsible for paying for translations. Prices vary depending on the length of document. If translating a document into several languages the invoice will be for each language.

Applied Language Solutions have a minimum charge of £40 which covers 350 words or less.

## **3.0 Protocol on using Interpreters and Translators**

This section provides overview guidance on using interpreters including:

- Referral
- Confidentiality
- People providing their own interpreters
- Conducting meetings with an interpreter present
- Emergency situations.

This protocol reflects the scope of the entire County Council. Key services provided to children and vulnerable adults will need to develop more specific protocols. Help on this can be given by the Equality Officer.

### **3.1 Referral**

Where the Council has an agreement with an agency providing interpreters, it is important that referrals are made in accordance with referral policies of those agencies.

### **3.2 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.

### **3.3 Using approved interpreters**

Where possible we should use interpreters who are qualified and independent. Where a person insists on using friends, relatives and local contacts, we will agree if there is no concern about conflicts of interest.

For services where there is a fundamental conflict of interest in using friends, relatives or contractors, the service should develop a protocol in line with its service needs. These protocols may extend the guidance in this paragraph to only using qualified interpreters.

### **3.4 At the beginning of the meeting**

At the beginning of the meeting, all parties must be clear about:

- The identity of the people involved.
- The purpose of the meeting.
- How long the meeting is likely to last.

- Any difficult language or concepts.
- How the initial introductions will be carried out.

### **3.5 Tips in carrying out a meeting**

- Gesture towards and make eye contact with the person, not their interpreter.
- Give time for the interpreter to summarise to the person.
- Expect the interpreter to summarise back any exchanges in the person's language between the client and the interpreter or any other people present.
- Be prepared to pause for the interpreter, particularly if they are signing.
- Be prepared to clarify difficult terminology or concepts.
- Check that the interpreter understands the questions asked and that the person has understood correctly.
- Be alert to non-verbal communication.
- Be prepared for the person or the interpreter to take a break in the meeting, particularly if it is stressful.

### **3.6 In emergencies**

In emergencies you may have to act immediately in situations where communication is difficult.

Some services will need to develop emergency provision for accessing interpreters and include it in their protocols. This may include a list of interpreters in key languages. The equality officer can assist you with developing these protocols.

## 4.0 Accessible Information: Using Plain Language

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

### 4.1 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>

## 5.0 Accessible Information: Keeping documents clear

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

### 5.1 Type size

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

### 5.2 Type weight

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

### 5.3 Typeface

Our Corporate Identity guidance states that we should use the following typefaces:

- Arial for day to day use.
- Gill Sans for printed publications
- Verdana on web pages.

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

### 5.4 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.**

### 5.5 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.

### 5.6 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.

### 5.7 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.

### 5.8 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.

### 5.9 Illustrations

Do not write letters over pictures.

### 5.10 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.

### 5.11 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.

## **6.0 Accessible Information in alternative formats**

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

### **6.1 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.

### **6.2 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.

### **6.3 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.

### **6.4 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.

### **6.5 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.

For key documents it is important to be aware of key languages. In Cumbria this changes, but in April 2006 the key languages are:

- Portuguese
- Bengali
- Cantonese
- Polish

- Lithuanian
- Turkish

Staff receiving a request for a translator should follow the same procedure as when they receive a request for an interpreter. This is outlined above in the section 2.6.

### **6.6 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 Urdu, 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.

### **6.7 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](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.
- Use Change Picture Bank for general documents.

Change Picture Bank is a CD with a set of symbols you can use to support a plain language text.

We are buying licenses to use Change Picture bank and setting up training to use the programme. If your service is interested in a license and you want to train staff, contact the Equalities Officer.

## 7.0 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 and make sure that the Directorate Equality Group is aware of the document.

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

The County 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 I: National guidance**

### **Disabilities: Accessibility guides**

Learning disabilities: Mencap

[http://www.mencap.org.uk/html/accessibility/accessibility\\_guides.asp](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.hcsp](http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public_seeitright.hcsp)

Hearing impairments/deafness: RNID

[http://www.rnid.org.uk/information\\_resources/communicating\\_better/](http://www.rnid.org.uk/information_resources/communicating_better/)

### **Plain English: Accessibility guide**

Plain English Campaign

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

## **Appendix 2: Providers of accessible information**

### **Translation firms**

Applied Language Solutions  
Yorkshire Office Park  
Armitage Bridge  
Huddersfield  
HD4 7NR  
0870 225 0921  
Translation services for 140 Languages  
<http://www.appliedlanguage.com/>

Web Translations  
Denby Dale House  
98 Denby Dale Rd.  
Wakefield  
WF2 7AH  
01924 360 460  
[www.click4translation.com](http://www.click4translation.com)

Semos  
01795 660456  
[www.semos.co.uk](http://www.semos.co.uk)

### **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](mailto:cindy@ecomdda.com)

## **Appendix 3: Cumbrian Accessibility Organisations**

### **Black and Minority Ethnic Communities**

AWAZ  
PO Box 282  
Carlisle  
CA2 6WZ  
[info@awaz.info](mailto:info@awaz.info)  
[www.AWAZ.info](http://www.AWAZ.info)  
0791 987277

AWAZ are run by and for people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities. They help people to form social networks and act as the countywide voice for all Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

Cumbria Multi-Cultural Service  
Irene Troughton  
Centre Manager  
Cumbria Multi-Cultural Centre  
48 Cavendish Street  
Barrow in Furness  
Cumbria LA14 1PZ  
[irene.troughton@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:irene.troughton@cumbriacc.gov.uk)  
01229 894401

The Cumbria Multi-Cultural Service is run by Cumbria County Council and provides advocacy and one to one support for people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

### **Disability networks**

Cumbria Disability Network  
Via Fred Wilenius c/o DaCE

Disability Association Carlisle and Eden  
DaCE  
Regents Court, Baron Way

Kingmoor Business Park, Kingstown  
CARLISLE  
Cumbria CA6 4SJ  
Mr Fred Wilenius  
0845 1249300

Allerdale Disability Association  
The Curwen Centre  
Curwen Park  
WORKINGTON  
Cumbria CA14 4YB  
Mr Martin Adair (information Officer)  
0845 1299954

Barrow & District Disability Association  
71-77 School Street  
BARROW-IN-FURNESS  
Cumbria LA14 1EJ  
Mrs M Burrow MBE  
01229 432599

Copeland Disability Forum  
Roper Street  
WHITEHAVEN  
Cumbria CA28  
01946 690333

### **Vision impairment/tape and braille**

Action for Blind People  
Suite 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
English Gate Plaza  
Botchergate  
Carlisle  
CA1 1RP  
[www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk](http://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk)

Barrow & District Society for the Blind Ltd  
67/69 Cavendish Street  
BARROW-IN-FURNESS  
Cumbria LA14 1QD  
Mr W Proctor  
01229 820698

Carlisle Society for the Blind  
9 Brunswick Street  
CARLISLE  
Cumbria CA1 1PB  
Mrs. A Robson  
01228 593104

Copeland Talking Newspaper for the Blind  
West Cumbria Society for the Blind  
22 Lowther Street  
WHITEHAVEN  
Cumbria CA28 7DG  
Marie Scott  
01946 592474

EVSB - Blind & Partially Sighted  
1 Mostyn Hall  
Friargate  
PENRITH  
Cumbria CA11 7XR  
Mr B Bardsley  
01768 891724

West Cumbria Society for the Blind  
22 Lowther Street  
WHITEHAVEN  
Cumbria CA28 7DG  
Mrs. P. Fitzgerald  
01946 592474

South Lakes Society for the Blind  
Stricklandgate House  
92 Stricklandgate  
Kendal  
Cumbria LA9 4PU  
Margaret McClure  
01539 742633

South Lakes Talking Newspaper Association  
16 Collin Hill  
KENDAL  
Cumbria LA9 5TA  
Bruce Carnaffin  
01539 720172

### **Learning disabilities/pictorial**

Carlisle People First  
Regents Court  
Kingmoor Business Park  
CARLISLE  
Cumbria CA6 4SJ  
Louise Townson, Project Director  
01228 674965

MENCAP Barrow  
107 Blackbutts Lane  
BARROW IN FURNESS  
Cumbria LA14 3JL  
Anne Wadsworth  
01229 470022

MENCAP Carlisle & District Association  
California House  
23 California Road  
CARLISLE  
Cumbria CA3 0BT  
Mrs S Gregory  
01228 595656

Eden Mencap Society  
The Bridge  
Wordsworth Street  
Penrith  
Cumbria CA11 7QY  
Mr M Holmes  
01768 892014

MENCAP Cumbria  
26 Queen Street  
Penrith  
Cumbria CA11 7XD  
01768 868854

Ulverston MENCAP  
32 Westhill Drive  
ULVERSTON  
Cumbria LA12 9NW  
Mrs J Crockett  
01229 585790

Mencap West Cumbria  
Nethermount  
Maryport Road, Dearham  
MARYPORT  
Cumbria CA15 7EE  
Mrs A Greggains  
01900 812812

Westmorland MENCAP  
18 Kentwood Road  
Kendal  
Cumbria LA9 5JX  
Mr G Fell  
01539 723169

## **Hearing impairment/BSL**

Cumbria Deaf Association  
3 Compton Street  
Carlisle  
CA1 1HT  
Mr J Brown  
01228 606433

## Appendix 4: Template for Confidentiality Agreement with interpreters

Interpreter's name			
I have read Cumbria County Council's protocol set out in the Accessible Information Policy			
Signed		Date	
I agree to keep confidential anything I hear when working as an interpreter for Cumbria County Council or anyone engaging with the council.			
Signed		Date	