Commission for Victims and Survivors

Accessible Information Policy

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Date of Next Review	December 2017

You may also be interested in the following policies:

Disability Action Plan

Accessible Information Statement

The Commission for Victims and Survivors is committed to making information as accessible as possible.

This document can be made available on request and where reasonably practicable in the following alternative formats:

- Easy Read;
- Braille;
- Audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY);
- Large print; and
- Minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 10 working days unless third party timescales dictate otherwise.
To ask for an alternative format, please contact the Commission using the following information:

Telephone: 028 9031 1000
Textphone: 028 9060 7400
Email: commission@cvsni.org

Introduction

The Commission for Victims and Survivors (the Commission) is committed to equality of opportunity as outlined in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988 ("the Act") and to the principle of making oral and written information as accessible as possible to all members of society.

The purpose of this policy is to help the Commission meet the information and communication needs of stakeholders and the wider community as effectively as possible. We want to make sure that our approach to the provision of written accessible information is clear, balanced, fair, transparent and accurate.

The policy sets out the standards people can expect from the Commission when we provide information.

Scope

The policy relates to all of the nine categories covered by Section 75 equality legislation including age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political opinion, dependants, religion and marital status.

The Commission has developed an Equality Scheme which sets out how we propose to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75. You can view the full Scheme at www.cvsni.org

The policy specifically complies with 'Chapter 6 – Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide' of the Commission's Equality Scheme (Appendix B).

The policy acknowledges that there are specific needs in relation to sensory impairment, learning disabilities, sexual orientation, older people, younger people, translation for minority ethnic groups and more general literacy levels that are of particular importance.

It recognises the need for information to be produced in a style and format that is easy to understand and accessible, and that promotes alternative formats to make sure information provided is as equitable as possible.

The policy applies to the many ways in which the Commission communicates its work. It covers a range of communication methods including:

- Telephone
- Text phone
- Internet
- Email
- Public consultation
- Research
- Meetings
- Seminars and conferences
- Exhibition material
- Printed material
- Public launches
- Press releases

- Public advertisements and
- Distributing information

The Commission is committed to maximising available resources to best effect to make sure positive and meaningful communication and involvement in working for and on behalf of victims and survivors.

The Commission's commitment will be reflected in a test of reasonableness. That is, we will proactively seek to inform people that alternative versions are available.

All publications including information leaflets and smaller publications should include information on alternative formats. Despite the small size of some publications, it is still important to plan for alternative formats. Publications such as the Annual Report & Accounts, results of research and the Corporate Plan should always contain information on alternative formats, because of the nature of the information and the length of the publication. Each request for an alternative format will be dealt with on an individual basis.

Priority Groups

The following people have been identified as having particular communication needs:

- People who are blind or have a sight impairment
- People who are deaf/hard of hearing
- People who are deaf and blind
- People with literacy difficulties
- People with learning difficulties
- Children and young people
- People from minority ethnic groups whose first language is not English

The Commission is committed to providing accessible information and therefore the accessible information statement, found on the following page, should be included in any new publication.

The Commission for Victims and Survivors is committed to making information as accessible as possible.

This document can be made available on request and where reasonably practicable in the following alternative formats:

- Easy Read;
- Braille;
- Audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY);
- Large print; and
- Minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

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The Royal National Institute for the Blind recommends that this statement is placed in a prominent position on a publication, preferably in 14 point type size. The inside front cover or the back cover are the recommended places for the statement. The Commission will adopt this recommendation

Supporting the Policy

It is necessary that all Commission staff are aware of the Accessible Information Policy so that it can be effectively implemented.

The Commission's policy will be supported by a Guidance and Information Pack for all staff which will be available on the Commission's internal server - CVSNI Data (V:). This pack will include the following documentation:

- Accessible Information Policy
- Corporate Identity Guidelines and
- Event Management Guidance

To ensure effective implementation, each member of the Senior Management Team will be responsible for making sure that all public information produced by staff within their respective teams, adheres to the Commission's Accessible Information Policy.

Support, advice and training for staff can be provided as and when required.

Distribution Channels

The Commission will continue to review and develop new methods of distribution to ensure that all of our information is accessible to everyone in Northern Ireland.

Some examples of alternative channels include:

- Talking Newspapers
- Belfast Telegraph Deaf/Talkabout column
- Distributing information through minority ethnic community groups
- The Commission information and press releases published in newsletters, and publications of local voluntary organisations, support groups and ethnic minority organisations
- Widening the circulation of the Commission publications, such as the Commission Newsletter and the Annual Report & Accounts, to voluntary organisations, support groups and ethnic minority groups and
- Distribution of the Commission information to GP surgeries, libraries, Post Offices and Citizens Advice Bureau

Review

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis. If legislation changes or if there are major changes to policy or practice then the date for review may be brought forward.

Monitoring

All public information produced by the Commission staff will be monitored regularly to make sure the policy is being applied.

Appendix 1 – Language

The Commission will take reasonable steps to provide information in the languages stated under the Belfast Agreement 1998 and subsequent legislation. As this recognises Irish and Ulster-Scots as official languages the Commission acknowledges that we have a requirement, on request, to produce information in Irish and Ulster-Scots.

We will consider requests for the Commission information to be supplied in other languages upon request.

Appendix 2 - Chapter 6: Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide

6.1.   The Commission for Victims and Survivors is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case.

6.2.   We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others.

In particular:
- People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats
- Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English
- Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

Access to information

6.3.   To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

6.4.   Alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

6.5.   The Commission for Victims and Survivors liaises with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.

6.6.   We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 10 working days.

6.7.   Where we provide information to children and young people, people with learning disabilities and minority ethnic communities we will contact representative groups or experts to establish the most effective and practicable approaches for contact.

6.8.   In disseminating information through the media we will seek to use different methods of communication i.e. radio, press, social media, leaflets etc as appropriate.

Access to services

6.9.   The Commission for Victims and Survivors is committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories.

6.10. The Commission for Victims and Survivors also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

Assessing public access to information and services

We will monitor annually across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted. The Commission will also have due regard to its duties on the promotion and encouragement of good relations between people of different racial groups, religious beliefs and political opinions. The Commission will ensure, where possible, that all literature promoting the Commission will display role models from different ethnic backgrounds.

Appendix 3 – Practical advice on making information accessible

In line with the Accessible Information Policy, the purpose of this guidance is to provide practical advice on how to make written information accessible.

Presenting Information

To make sure all Commission information is as accessible and equitable as possible, all public documents will be produced using the following style:

- Use simple language and plain English where appropriate. This makes information easier to understand for everyone.
- To address literacy difficulties use simple, clear text with short sentences, simple punctuation and no jargon, acronyms or abbreviations.
- Use 12 point Arial (as used in this document) as minimum but when appropriate, consideration should be given to using font size 14 point Arial.
- Avoid block capitals, italics or underlining. They all make text harder to read.
- Short titles of documents or headings can be in upper case e.g. VETTING REVIEW. However, upper and lower case is recommended for longer titles and most headings e.g. Review of Speech and Language Therapy Service. Titles and headings can be in bold.
- The use of unjustified right hand margins creates even spacing between words and makes text easier to read (as used in this document).
- Plan what you want to write. Cut out any unnecessary detail and present important ideas in a logical order.
- Use active and personal language. Using 'you' and 'we' makes your writing clearer and more direct.
- Avoid using slashes between words. It is better to say "and" or "or" rather than "and/or".
- Finish a sentence at the end of a page. Do not run a sentence across two pages.
- Clear and simple design and layout of information.
- Use of black ink on white or yellow paper where appropriate.
- Keep the layout of regular publications consistent for example, a monthly newsletter. But make sure that you are flexible and can give people the information in different ways.

- Consider the range of alternative formats that include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.
- For large documents there should be consideration given to the binding. For example where the document is large it may be more appropriate to use ring binding rather than stitching.
- Where you are using information that another organisation has produced (for example information about a venue) ask them for that information in different formats so that you can pass it on to anyone who needs it. If they are service providers, they will have duties under the Disability Discrimination Act NI (DDA) 1995 to provide information in this way.

Printing handouts of PowerPoint presentations

If you are producing handouts of a Powerpoint presentation avoid using the option offered by Powerpoint for printing handouts 3 slides per page. This is because it renders the font size completely inaccessible for your reader. Instead, keep the full page slide and use the option to print out 2 (or 4) pages per sheet in the Printer Properties. This will keep the font size accessible and still provide sufficient space for the reader to write down notes. In short.

Use:
Print – Settings – Full Page Slide

Do not use:

Print – Settings – Handouts – 3 slides per page

Using the internet to present information

- In theory the internet makes information more accessible to a wider public and allows internet users to adjust certain formatting elements according to their needs, However, be aware that some groups are less likely to use the internet, above all older people and people with a disability.
- Provide text alternatives for any visual or audio content (including images) so that it can be changed into other forms people need, such as large print, braille, speech, symbols or simpler language.
- Create content that can be presented in different ways (for example simpler layout) without losing information or structure.
- Make it easier for users to see and hear content including separating foreground from background. If the information is conveyed through colour differences in an image (or other non-text format), the colour may not be seen by users with colour deficiencies.
- Provide users enough time to read and use content. People with disabilities such as blindness, low vision, dexterity impairments, and cognitive limitations may need more time to read content or to perform functions such as filling out on-line forms. If Web functions are time-dependent, it will be difficult for some users to perform the required action before the set time runs out. This may make the service inaccessible to them. Provide options to disable time limits,
- Do not design content in a way that is known to cause seizures. Ensure you do not include anything that flashes more than three times in any one second period.
- Moving, blinking, scrolling, or auto-updating information can distract users during their interaction with a Web page. Content that moves or auto-updates can be a barrier to anyone who has trouble reading stationary text quickly as well as anyone who has trouble tracking moving objects. It can also cause problems for screen readers. Include a mechanism for the user to pause, stop, or hide this information.

- Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are.

Where to go for further support and advice on presenting information on the internet

Practical guidelines have been developed on an international level. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 cover a wide range of recommendations for making web content more accessible. The above advice is taken from these guidelines. Following these guidelines will make content accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these. It will also often make your Web content more accessible to users in general.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20

Appendix 4: Guidelines on making information accessible for and inclusive of particular equality groupings

Making information accessible for older people

- Avoid using blue as it is often harder for older people to read.
- Use matt paper to avoid brightness and glare which make it hard for older people to read.
- Use a minimum font size of 14 point and 20 point for people with visual impairments.
- Consider using an A3 format (as an A4 booklet) as you can use larger print and images which are easier for people to see.

Making information accessible to people who are blind or partially sighted

Make sure you adhere to the General Guidelines presented in Part 1. In addition, the following is important:

- Use line spacing that provides for at least 1.5 to 2 times the space between words within a line.
- Make sure that your text clearly contrasts with your background. Use dark against light rather than the other way round.
- Avoid setting text vertically.
- Avoid columns. If you need to use them, make sure there is a sufficient gap between them.
- Don't put text on top of images.
- Don't use glossy paper.
- Some peope who are blind or partially sighted find it difficult to read numbers. Use words instead.
- You can easily produce documents in large print. These use a larger type size, between 16 and 22 points. If you are unsure, ask the individual what size they prefer.

Making information accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing

People who are deaf or hard of hearing and are sign-language users communicate in a different language. This means that English is not their first language. Their needs are not automatically met by providing written information; some will have a level of literacy in English that is below average.

It is important that you consider providing written information as visual alternatives. This includes creating signed content on websites or British or Irish Sign language DVDs.

Consider the use of SMS text message facility for provision of short pieces of information.

Making information accessible to people with dyslexia or literacy difficulties

Make sure you adhere to the General Guidelines presented in Part 1. In addition, the following is important:

- Make sure you structure your text into short chunks of text. Clearly separate these.
- Consider including a glossary to explain any terms that you are using.
- Use words and concepts consistently throughout a document.
- If you are using illustrations, place them at the end of a paragraph. Don't put them in the middle of them.
- Avoid letting text run over illustrations.
- Avoid dark colours as background, especially blue and purple. They make reading harder.
- Some people with dyslexia find it easier to read if text is presented against a cream background or a pale pastel colour.
- When using difficult words, repetition can be very helpful.

Making information accessible to people with a disability

As mentioned at the start, the HSC Trusts recently produced new guidance focusing on communicating with people with a disability, which looks at various ways of communicating. The focus of this document is advice relating to the provision of written information (and alternative formats).

Following the advice provided in Part 1 (General guidelines on making information accessible) will ensure that you meet many of the specific needs of people with a disability. Over and above these, the following guidelines apply to specific types of disabilities.

Making information accessible to people with a learning disability

- Use 16 point Arial or bigger.
- Avoid using green as colour for paper.
- Avoid words in white on a coloured background – they can be harder to read.
- Avoid shiny paper.
- Avoid punctuation other than full stops.
- Use bullet points for examples and instructions.
- Use numerals for numbers not words (10 instead of ten).
- Use just 1 idea in every sentence.
- Use words and concepts consistently throughout a document.
- Consider including a glossary to explain any terms that you are using.
- Use pictures of places rather than maps.
- Avoid using charts.
- Avoid splitting sentences over 2 pages.
- Avoid using columns.
- Consider using alternative formats such as Easy Read or Makaton.

Making information accessible for children and young people

- Consider using coloured fonts, but make sure you use colours that are clearly visible.
- Do not use the font Comic Sans as this is difficult to read.
- Consider using cartoons and photographs. This may be more appropriate for younger children.
- Use simple language.

Making information accessible to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are often grouped together because they are all targets of similar forms of discrimination. Within these communities, however, there is a tremendous diversity of experience. Materials that are produced and the images used for lesbian,gay, bisexual and transgender communities need to recognise the wide range of backgrounds that people come from.
- Many languages use terms to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people which may be derogatory. If you are translating material, be aware of the cultural context of the terms you are using.
- As a general rule avoid using the label 'homosexual' as it is still viewed negatively. Most people are happy with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender but if in doubt - ask!
- Use neutral language such as 'partners',' parents' and 'he or she'. Avoid using the term 'spouse' and exclusive pronouns (referring to 'he' only or 'she' only) as those assume that all couples are heterosexual.
- Having lesbian,gay,bisexual and transgender information on display creates a welcoming atmosphere. This could include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people showing people from the diverse community in which we live.
- Use images and photographs of lesbian,gay, bisexual and transgender people – such as same sex couples – in a wide range of your publicity materials, not just in documents which are specifically aimed at lesbian,gay, bisexual and transgender people. This sends out a clear message that you recognise the positive contribution that lesbian,gay, bisexual and transgender people can make to our society and that your entire organisation is welcoming to lesbian,gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Making information accessible for black and ethnic minority people

- People who are black or who identify themselves as ethnic minorities have very varied needs. Try to avoid making assumptions.
- Work with people from black and minority ethnic communities to ask them how they want their information presented.
- Find out as much as you can about the black or minority ethnic community group or groups your information is for, so you can make sure it meets their needs.
- Do not just translate information into another language as direct translation from English into another language doesn't always make sense. Translations need to take account of culture.
- Use translators and interpreters who have proper training and who understand cultural differences. The translator may use words and pictures to help people feel the information is right for them.
- Produce leaflets in different languages if required.