The provision of accessible format materials for print-disabled people

Guidance from UKAAF

UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF)

Because format quality matters

Why format quality matters

"When organisations send me information in formats that I can read myself it allows me to be independent, feel informed and appreciated - just like every other customer."
End-user

"Producing consistently high quality accessible formats helps us to maintain our reputation, to gain new customers and to retain existing ones."
Transcription agency

"We are committed to ensuring that our customers with print disabilities receive the same information, of the same quality, as everyone else."
Service provider

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance from the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is primarily aimed at service providers who supply information to print-disabled people. It will be particularly useful for anyone involved in the planning, provision or procurement of accessible format materials.

The guidance includes:

- information about accessible formats

- your legal responsibility under the Equality Act

- minimum standards for the service you should be providing to print-disabled customers

- guidance to help make your information accessible to print-disabled customers

- advice on how to commission accessible formats from transcription suppliers.

Disclaimer

This guidance may include references to external websites, services or products for which UKAAF accepts no responsibility. This information is given without any representation or endorsement of those websites, services or products.

Contents

1 Introduction

By obtaining these guidelines you are demonstrating your commitment to helping people with a print disability to read your materials if they find reading standard print materials difficult or impossible.

This guidance concentrates specifically on materials suitable for blind and partially sighted people - such as large print, audio, braille and electronic file formats. However, others with a print disability, for example with dyslexia or motor-difficulties, may also find such materials necessary.

The provision of accessible information is a key requirement of the Equality Act which service providers must follow, but good customer service and business practice includes communicating with your customers and staff in ways which meet their reading needs. By providing accessible format materials, you not only demonstrate your commitment to equality and inclusion, but also increase your reach and customer base. It therefore makes good business sense.

This guidance will help you and your organisation to incorporate good practice into your business and provide good quality accessible format materials in a timely and appropriate way.

2 About UKAAF

The UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is the industry association whose mission is to set standards for accessible formats that meet end-user needs through:

- development, delivery and promotion of codes, standards, and best practice for the production and provision of accessible formats

- consultation and collaboration with transcribers, service providers and users of accessible formats.

Members of UKAAF include organisations and individuals with an interest in the provision of quality accessible formats, such as service providers, transcribers, educators, researchers, print services, publishers, and end-users.

Through its leadership and representation, standards-setting, and by fostering a spirit of cooperation between members, UKAAF ensures that the needs and requirements of end-users are understood by service providers and transcribers to help improve the quality of accessible formats.

Please see the section on "Where to get further help" towards the end of this document for more information about the benefits of being a member of UKAAF.

3   Definition of print disability

A print-disabled person is anyone for whom a visual, cognitive, or physical disability hinders the ability to read print. This includes all visual impairments, dyslexia, and any physical disabilities that prevent the handling of a physical copy of a print publication. Source: Copyright Licensing Agency Print Disability Licensing Scheme, Guidelines for Licensees 2010.

4   What are accessible formats?

A standard clear print font size of 14-point for literature is recommended and will meet many customer's needs.

Accessible formats are alternatives to printed information, used by blind and partially sighted people, or others with a print disability.

Accessible formats can include:

- large print

- digital audio

- electronic text

- braille

- accessible images (tactile and large print)

- Easy Read, for people with a learning disability

All accessible formats must be of high quality if they are to be legible, usable and meaningful to your customers.

This guidance does not cover the accessibility of websites themselves, but you should ensure that your website and the information provided on it is accessible to people with print disabilities. By providing documents in a range of formats on your website (such as styled Word documents, plain text files and MP3 audio files), not just PDFs, you can ensure that your information is accessible to a wide audience, including people with print disabilities.

For further information please see the section on "Additional resources" towards the end of this document.

5 The Equality Act 2010 and your legal obligations as a service provider

From 1 October 2010, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), along with other discrimination laws, was replaced by a new piece of legislation called the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act aims to bring together a number of different acts and legislations in a simplified way to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

As a service provider, you need to be aware of your obligations under the Equality Act, including the rights of blind and partially sighted people and others with a print disability to request and receive information and communications in accessible formats.

Service providers have a responsibility to anticipate the requests for accessible formats that print-disabled people might make - they should not wait for a request before making the necessary adjustments. However the first time they deal with an individual customer, the customer may have to make his or her needs known. This is to help the service provider make the right adjustment.

Service providers who do not comply with the Act put themselves at risk of complaints, or face the possibility of legal action. In the first instance, if a service provider does not comply with the Act then a customer with a print disability could and should complain to that service provider. This failure may be an oversight or error, which can quickly be rectified; and a complaint can also be a way of highlighting these responsibilities to the service provider. In some situations, if a complaint doesn't resolve the situation, a customer may appeal to the appropriate ombudsman and ultimately, there is the prospect of court proceedings - although this is very much a last resort.

For further information please see the section on "Additional resources" towards the end of this document.

6 Minimum standards for the provision of accessible format materials

As a minimum, UKAAF expects service providers to:

☐ Use a standard clear print font size of 14-point in regular literature.

☐ Offer accessible formats to people with print disabilities, including at least:

- large print (minimum of 16 point print)

- audio (MP3, CDDA, tape on request)

- electronic text (styled Word documents, plain text files)

- braille (contracted (grade two), non-capitalised, other combinations on request)

☐ Know and respond to customers' accessible format needs and seek regular feedback.

☐ Promote the availability of accessible formats clearly on all printed information and via marketing channels.

☐ Ensure all relevant staff can handle accessible format enquiries competently.

☐ Provide quality accessible formats promptly and in a timely manner.

☐ Build the procurement and/or production of accessible formats into business processes.

7 How to provide a good level of service to print-disabled customers

This section provides more detailed guidance on the steps you should take within your business to help you provide a good level of service to your print-disabled customers.

7.1 Informing your business processes

1 Commit to providing an equal standard of service to all of your customers.

2 Know your customers and develop policies based on sound knowledge of current legislation.

3 Build the costs of producing accessible formats into your publishing budget.

4 Make sure that all your printed and electronic information (e.g. documents created and posted on website) is clearly written and well-structured in the first place - typeset in a minimum of 12 point print, though 14 point is recommended.

5 Create additional business information as necessary - such as accessible directions to your premises or specific literature promoting your accessibility services.

6 Decide which business information you should be providing in accessible formats (e.g. correspondence, reports, statements, invoices, forms, brochures, flyers etc).

7 Decide which accessible formats you will produce and let your customers know what's available and how to request it.

8 Document your decisions in an accessibility policy and disseminate throughout your organisation.

9 Promote the availability of accessible formats via all your marketing channels - on all printed information, website, and via all relevant staff, especially those who are customer-facing.

10 Train all relevant and customer-facing staff so that they know how to handle accessible information queries.

11 Record the accessible format needs of your customers - and make the information available throughout your business, so that customers consistently get the correct accessible formats from you.

12 Seek and learn from customer feedback, adopting a continuous improvement approach and making improvements to benefit your customers.

13 Deal with complaints regarding accessible formats promptly and fairly.

7.2 Know the needs of your print-disabled customers

1 Know how many of your customers have a print disability and require accessible formats.

2 Let your customers know which accessible formats you provide.

3 Ask your customers what accessible formats they require.

4 Contact your customers annually to find out if their accessible format needs have changed, and if they are satisfied with the accessible formats they receive and access on your website.

7.3 Producing accessible formats

1 Determine which accessible formats you can produce in-house and which you will need to commission from a transcription supplier.

2 Build-in any additional production time necessary to ensure the accessible format versions are produced and distributed in good time.

3 Use a competent transcription supplier and take advice from them on the best ways to present your information in accessible formats (our guidance later in this document will help you).

4 Agree an SLA/contract with your transcription agency for any regular production of your accessible formats.

8　Detailed guidance for commissioning accessible formats from transcription suppliers

The following guidance will help you successfully commission accessible formats from a reputable transcription supplier.

8.1　Where to find transcription suppliers

There are a variety of accessible format transcription suppliers in the UK, and the majority of them provide an excellent service. You may already use or be in contact with suppliers of transcription services, but if you are not, UKAAF lists transcription supplier members on its website, but does not endorse or guarantee the quality of the service they offer. In all cases, you will want to check a transcription supplier's level of competence, expertise and the quality control processes they have in place. In time, UKAAF hopes to introduce a quality assessment scheme which will certify the quality of materials produced by transcription suppliers.

8.2　How to identify a good transcription supplier and get the service you require

By asking a few simple questions you will be able to select a transcription supplier that will meet your needs. It is advisable to speak to more than one transcription supplier, so that you can make comparisons and decide which one is best for you.

1　Find out what types of materials they produce in accessible formats. Make sure they can produce the types of business documents to the standard you require.

2　Find out which accessible formats they produce. Make sure that they can produce the range of accessible formats you require, or you may have to source another supplier for a

different format. You may find it easier to source all your accessible formats from a single supplier, even if they can't produce them all themselves. They may be able to arrange this sub-contracting for you.

3   Find out how long it normally takes them to transcribe work and be sure it meets your timetable to send information out in a timely manner to your customers.

4   Find out who their other customers are, to assess if they are used to producing your type of work.

5   Request testimonials from other customers who have used their service. Any good transcription supplier will be happy to provide you with this information.

6   Request written quotes for the cost of your transcription requirements in advance, making sure that all costs have been specified, so that there are no surprises later.

7   Ask if they use Service Level agreements (SLAs) with regular customers. You may wish to agree an SLA for large or repeat work, but some one-off jobs may not need one.

8   Find out if you are able to request additional copies (after your initial order) if more are needed, and what the turnaround time and costs are likely to be.

9   Ask what data protection processes they employ to protect your confidential information (such as customer information, financial statements or bills) - this will help you find out how they store your files, and if you will be asking them to send the accessible formats out to your customers, how they ensure that this information is protected.

10 Ask if they have processes in place to collect feedback from customers - this will help you find out how proactive they are in improving and maintaining a quality service themselves.

8.3 Be Prepared! Questions a transcription supplier will ask you

Now you've selected the transcription supplier you will work with to produce your accessible formats, there are a number of things you need to consider before starting to commission work from them. A good transcription supplier will guide you through the process of commissioning accessible formats and give you advice, but it's a good idea to think about the following areas beforehand.

1 Type of information you want transcribed - is the material simple (e.g. a letter or brochure), or complex (e.g. a report containing graphs, tables, graphics, a bill, financial statement, or exam materials).

2 Company branding and finishing - decide what type of company branding you want included in the accessible format version and how you'd like the finished materials to be presented.

3 Timescales - know when you want the job completed by. Typically the accessible format versions should be available at the same time as the print version - a few days delay may be OK, but much longer is not usually acceptable, especially for time-critical or personal information.

4 Format and delivery of the original information - establish what format you need to send the original file in, and agree how you will get the information to the transcription supplier so that they can do the work.

5 Types of accessible format that will be required - decide whether you will request large print, uncontracted (grade one), contracted (grade two), capitalised or non-capitalised braille, audio etc.

6 Number of copies for each format - know how many of your customers require which format.

7 Packaging - consider how you want the finished materials packaged (envelopes, CD wallets etc).

8 Delivery of the accessible formats - do you want the transcription agency to send the accessible formats directly to your customers or will you distribute them yourself? If you are sending out the materials yourself, think about how you will organise this.

9 Storing transcribed files - establish if, and for how long the transcription supplier will store production files, and/or if they will supply you with electronic masters for you to keep yourself.

10 Payment terms - agree when and how payment will be required.

11 Approved suppliers - your transcription supplier may need to be set-up on your internal purchasing systems, so allow time to do this, preferably before you need to commission your first order.

8.4 How transcription suppliers will interpret your printed information

As part of the quotation stage, a good transcription supplier will review your printed information and speak to you about any adaptations they need to make to ensure that accessible format versions will be understood by end-users.

For those unfamiliar with commissioning accessible format materials, common interpretation practices include:

- Removing purely pictorial images - where the information is not necessary to the user or is already conveyed within the text.

- Adapting/converting images or diagrams (where they are vital to aid comprehension) - putting pictorial information into words, or producing tactile or large print images.

- Including additional navigation information - to help the user find their way around the document (e.g. contents page, headers, page numbers, additional headings or other signposts through the material and so on).

- Re-ordering information - to make it easier for the end-user who is not able to scan the page at a glance.

- Explaining complex tabular information in a narrative form - this can be especially useful for financial data.

A good transcription supplier will have vast knowledge of how best to present information in accessible formats, and may sometimes tell you that what you are asking for will not work well in accessible formats. For example, it is not good practice to record text over background music, as it makes it difficult for a print-disabled reader with an additional hearing impairment to hear what is being said.

Remember that a good transcription supplier wants to ensure that your information is as easily understood by people with print disabilities, as your printed information is by sighted readers, and that your brand's integrity is maintained.

Please listen to your transcription supplier - they know what works best for accessible formats! If you have strong views they may be able to propose an acceptable compromise.

8.5 Distributing accessible formats to your customers

If you wish them to, transcription suppliers will often be able to send out the accessible formats direct to your customers for you. If this is the case, as part of commissioning the work, you should

agree arrangements for sending them your customer address details (for postage labels etc) and discuss how the items are to be packaged,

If the accessible formats are being sent to you to distribute to your customers yourself, they should arrive from the transcription supplier undamaged and in good condition, and be clearly labelled (in print) what format the documents are. This will make it easy for you to send out the right accessible formats to the right customers.

Packaging for accessible formats should:

- Be of an appropriate size, so that the contents fit snugly, but are not squashed - too small and the contents may burst out, too big and the contents may move around and become damaged.

- Be of an appropriate thickness of packaging - CDs should always be distributed in packaging that will protect them from damage e.g. cardboard wallets. Large print and braille documents can usually be posted in ordinary envelopes.

- Be appropriately labelled - so that the customer can clearly tell who the information is from (large print address labels are advisable for all accessible format materials).

- Have the appropriate postage applied - some accessible formats can be sent post free using the Royal Mail's "Articles for the blind" postage labels. Please note that this scheme has very tight regulations around the types of materials that can be sent and who can send them. For further information please see the section on "Additional resources" towards the end of this document.

9 Where to get further help

UKAAF assists businesses and organisations by advising how to meet the needs of customers and clients with print disabilities;

providing guidance on how to source and provide quality accessible formats like large print, audio, braille, electronic file formats and Easy Read; and helping you to understand your responsibilities as a service provider.

Through our website and magazine, members will also gain access to:

- findings from public consultations and end-user research

- research and innovation in accessible formats

- information on suppliers of transcription services

- guidance and advice on standards for accessible formats

- opportunities to review and help to develop standards and guidance.

In addition to supporting service providers and transcribers, UKAAF also represents people with print disabilities. We believe that because format quality matters, end-users should have genuine input into the development of standards for accessible information. By collecting and sharing users' views with service providers and transcribers we can help them to deliver a quality service which meets users' needs.

UKAAF has a User Advisory Group (UAG) so we can include blind and partially sighted people and others with print disabilities in ongoing research and consultation on key accessible format issues.

There are many benefits of being a member of UKAAF, not least to demonstrate your commitment to quality accessible formats. For more information visit us at www.ukaaf.org.

10 Additional resources

The Government Equalities Office (GEO) has responsibility for equality strategy and legislation and provides up-to-date information on the Equality Act 2010 www.equalities.gov.uk

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) produces a range of downloadable codes of practice to accompany the Equality Act. Of particular interest to service providers is the Code of Practice on Services, Public Functions and Associations http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/

RNIB's website provides information about the Equality Act and particular implications for service providers and blind and partially sighted people www.rnib.org.uk/equalityact

The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) provides online resources to help you improve information for disabled people www.odi.gov.uk

RNIB's "See it Right" pack contains information and guidance to help you make your information accessible to people with print disabilities www.rnib.org.uk/seeitright

RNIB's "Web Access Centre" offers information and advice on making your website accessible to everyone www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/webaccessibility

The Royal Mail and RNIB provide more information on-line regarding the "Articles for the blind" postage scheme www.royalmail.com/portal/rm/jump2?catId=400130&mediaId=80600742
www.rnib.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/accesstoinformation/articlesfortheblind/Pages/articles_blind_scheme.aspx

11 Your feedback is welcome

We would welcome your views on this guidance, any suggestions for additions, or case studies of how this guidance has helped you. You might like to share your experience in an article in our magazine 'Format Matters'.

You can phone, email or write to us - our details are at the back, or use the feedback form on our website www.ukaaf.org.

If you find UKAAF's guidance valuable, please encourage others to join by visiting our website.

Document reference information

Citation guidance	The provision of accessible format materials for print-disabled people: Guidance from UKAAF (2012) UK Association for Accessible Formats. Ref: G002
Document title	The provision of accessible format materials for print-disabled people: Guidance from UKAAF
Publisher	UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF)
Document ref	G002
Version number	1.0
Publication date	June 2012
Document purpose	Good practice guidance for service providers
Primary contributors	Sarah Home and Sarah Morley Wilkins
Board approval	June 2012
Acknowledgements	With thanks to all our reviewers for their valuable comments
Superseded documents	N/A
Template version	1.0

Notes

Notes

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