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# **Service level agreements**

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**Guidance from UKAAF**

## 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

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### **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 and transcribers who are responding to service level agreement (SLA) requests. It will be particularly useful for anyone involved in the planning, provision or procurement of accessible format materials.

### **The guidance includes:**

- Information on the different sections that an SLA may contain
- An explanation of the purpose of each section in an SLA
- Suggested text for each section in an SLA

### **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.

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## 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.

**Note:** This guidance aims to help service providers to draft a sound service level agreement (SLA) with their provider of accessible formats. It cannot be an exhaustive guide, nor should it replace qualified legal advice, where appropriate.

The suggested text is shown only as an example and you may, or may not need to re-draft the text to define your requirements more accurately.

## 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 SLA Section 1: Opening statements**

The Opening statements section should state the service contract and the parties covered by the SLA. It may also refer to any subcontractors to the main contract holder and which services they are to provide. This section also states the period for which the SLA is active.

### **4.1 Suggested text**

This Service Level Agreement (SLA) is between Major Bank Corporation, hereinafter referred to as “the Customer”, and AF Transcribers Ltd, hereinafter referred to as “the Supplier”, for the provision of accessible format transcription services from 1 June 2012 to 31 May 2015. The requirements contained here refer to all services provided either by AF Transcribers Ltd or any of their agents and subcontractors.

## **5 SLA Section 2: Services to be provided**

This section should describe the services that are to be provided by the supplier. It should start with how the original material is delivered to the supplier, the broad timeline for turning material around and the information on performance that is required after work is completed.

The management information required by your supplier will depend on your own systems and the nature of the documents and services being provided. The type of information should include the number of documents transcribed into what formats. Where the services include transcription of many pages of individual items of correspondence, you may need your supplier to tell you how many original pages there were and how many accessible format pages this created.

The information should also demonstrate how many items were dispatched within the terms of the SLA and how many were not. You may also ask for information the administration work included in the services and the level of quality control applied to the service. Where the service being supplied includes stockpiling of titles for regular distribution, you should also require a stock level at the end of each reporting period.

### **5.1 Suggested text**

#### **5.1.1 Example 1**

The Supplier provides braille and large print transcription of daily correspondence from hard copy documents. The correspondence is recorded on arrival, transcribed, packaged and distributed to the Customer's customers. Each item of correspondence is produced and dispatched within [24 hours / 48 hours / five working days]. Management information is provided with an invoice at the end of each month.

The management information must be supplied under the following headings:

- Quantity of original pages daily
- Quantity of accessible format pages daily
- Percentage within SLA timescales
- Cost of accessible format pages daily
- Cost of administration daily

#### **5.1.2 Example 2**

The Supplier provides ad hoc braille, large print and audio transcription services from electronic file documents. Transcribed documents are produced and distributed to end users on demand

and within the timescale agreed with the Customer in each case. Management information is provided with an invoice at the end of each month.

The management information must be supplied under the following headings:

- Title and quantity of original documents
- Title and quantity of accessible format documents
- Percentage within SLA timescales
- Cost per title and accessible format
- Opening and closing stock per title and accessible format

## **6 SLA Section 3: Aims of the SLA**

This section briefly describes the aims of the SLA.

### **6.1 Suggested text**

The aim of this agreement is to define:

- The minimum level of service expected from the Supplier
- How the success criteria for these services shall be measured
- How corrective actions should be undertaken by the Supplier to remedy any underperformance in services
- Any punitive measures to be taken by the Customer in the instance an underperformance and/or failure to correct an underperformance in services
- A pricing schedule which all agents of the Customer will use as an indicator of costs associated with the service
- The data protection and security requirements of the Supplier
- The responsibilities of the Customer and the Supplier

- File transfer protocols and the provision of original documents

## 7 SLA Section 4: Responsibilities

This section outlines the general responsibilities of both the Customer and the Supplier. It does not specify the level of service required, but sets out the general requirements of the organisations involved in the running of the SLA. An organisation using this suggested text may need to define some of these responsibilities in more detail.

### 7.1 Suggested text

#### **Customer responsibilities**

The Customer is committed to:

- Paying correctly presented invoices promptly
- Monitoring the Supplier's performance and providing timely, constructive feedback
- Informing the Supplier of any changes to the services required as soon as possible

#### **Supplier responsibilities**

The Supplier is committed to:

- Publishing and updating all legally required policies, including health and safety and personnel management policies
- Holding the appropriate, valid insurance for the service being provided
- Informing the Customer of any changes in circumstance or procedures that affect the service provided
- Publishing, testing and updating a continuity plan

- Dealing with all enquiries and complaints from the Customer promptly and transparently

## **8 SLA Section 5: Contact points**

This section lists the contact points for each aspect of the service being provided. You may not require all of the contact points listed, but should specify those that are relevant to your requirements. In each case, it is suggested that the name, direct telephone number, email address and mobile telephone number are recorded in the SLA.

### **8.1 Suggested text**

#### **Customer Contact Points**

Operational (during office hours)

Finance (during office hours)

Operational (out of hours)

#### **Supplier Contact Points**

Account Management (during office hours)

Operational (during office hours)

Out of hours

## **9 SLA Section 6: Review**

This section defines how the performance of the supplier and the arrangements of the service are to be reviewed. It should note how often the service is to be reviewed and how the reviews will be

arranged. A sample agenda for a review meeting is given in Appendix A of this document.

### **9.1 Suggested text**

A service level review shall be held quarterly. Dates and arrangements will be confirmed on an ongoing basis. Some review meetings will be via teleconference and will not require either the Customer or the Supplier to travel. The Supplier is responsible for alerting the Customer in writing to the approach of a review date. The Customer is responsible for drafting and circulating an agenda for the meeting and for determining the arrangements and date. The Supplier is responsible for taking notes of the review meeting and circulating the notes to the Customer within one week of the meeting.

## **10 SLA Section 7: Service specification**

This section describes each key element of the service to be provided. For each key element, the customer should specify the key deliverables, the success criteria and the measurement. Each key deliverable should also be allocated a category of remedial action required as a consequence of failure to perform. Some key elements of the service may not prove as serious a breach of the SLA as others and the categories of retrieval should reflect these different levels. Appendix B provides an example of the categorisation of breaches of an SLA.

Finally, for each key deliverable, the SLA should describe the quality control applied to that element of the service. The quality control measures should include testing of production machines as well as proofing of the material as it is produced. The frequency and depth of the proofing will be determined by factors such as the purpose of the material being transcribed and the process by

which the documents are transcribed. You may want to request copies of quality control records on a random basis.

For daily correspondence, where much of the transcription process may be automated and a high quantity of documents may be processed daily, a random proof read of an agreed percentage will be adequate. For documents that are transcribed on an ad hoc basis and for which electronic files are supplied, a proof read may not be needed, but can be requested. This may be charged for in addition to the normal transcription rates. This will also depend upon the purpose of the document.

It is extremely important to differentiate between the term “user-checked” and “proofread”. A check of the quality does not require the checker to be a user of the format as long as the supplier has well-defined quality standards to which they adhere. A user-check does not mean that the document has been proof read, and proof reading can be completed by any individual who is trained to do so.

The following suggested text describes two of the key elements of a daily transcription service for personal correspondence. You will need to identify each key element of the service that you require and specify how it is to be delivered.

### **10.1 Suggested text**

#### **Key element 1**

Maintaining records of all items of correspondence and providing monthly management information reports.

#### **Key deliverables**

- Records of all correspondence received and distributed maintained for 3 months

- Monthly reports on correspondence received and distributed maintained for 12 months

### **Success criteria**

- For each item of correspondence, the Supplier records the date of receipt, the name of the end recipient, the type of item, the number of print pages, the number of accessible format pages and the date of distribution to the end recipient
- Each monthly report displays the month being reported, each item distributed during the month, the list of recipients, the date of receipt and distribution and the number of print and accessible format pages
- Each monthly report states the total of each of the fields above for the month and the total charge raised
- Electronic files for each item of transcribed correspondence are retained for 3 historical months
- Electronic files for each monthly report are retained for 12 months
- Electronic files are erased securely after 3 months for each item of correspondence and after 12 months for the monthly reports

### **Measurement**

- A monthly report provided on an agreed day of each month to the Customer
- A monthly report provided on an agreed day of each month listing each of the electronic files erased

### **Category**

- Select appropriate penalty category from Appendix B

### **Quality control**

- The totals match those in the monthly invoice raised to the Customer
- A 10% sample of the items listed in the report are checked against stored electronic files

### **Key element 2**

Transcription, production and delivery of items of daily correspondence in large print.

#### Key deliverables

- Every hard copy of correspondence appropriately marked is transcribed, produced and distributed within 2 business days
- A record of each item of correspondence is supplied in the monthly management information reports

### **Success criteria**

- Each item of correspondence is scanned, checked and stored securely on the Supplier's network
- Each item of correspondence is edited to be presented appropriately in the standard large print format of 18pt Arial
- All transcribed items are produced on 100gsm off-white stock
- Each large print item is matched with its original print version and dispatched via first class post to the end recipient

### **Measurement**

- A daily report shows the number of items received, the number of items dispatched and the number outstanding
- Operational documentation that records each of the steps carried out during the transcription process

### **Category**

- Select appropriate penalty category from Appendix B

### **Quality control**

- All items visually checked against the original files
- A 10% sample of the items processed daily are proof read against the original files
- Daily test files are run on each production machine

## **11 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](http://www.ukaaf.org).

## 12 Additional resources

At the time of publication, there is a website that contains an SLA Toolkit. Although UKAAF can't endorse the content, you may find it useful to visit [www.service-level-agreement.net](http://www.service-level-agreement.net)

The Government's Business Link website ([www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)) has a guide to drafting a service level agreement, as well as other information on running a business.

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) has significant guidance on managing suppliers and monitoring their performance. See [www.cips.org](http://www.cips.org)

## Appendix A: Sample SLA review meeting agenda

- Minutes of previous meeting
- Matters arising
- Review of performance against the current SLA (monthly reports supplied by the supplier)
- Review of issues and remedial actions since the previous meeting

- Suggested updates to the SLA
- Changes in the customer and supplier organisations since the previous meeting
- Anticipated changes in the customer and supplier organisations within six months
- Contract status review
- Any other business
- Date of the next meeting

### **Appendix B: Sample categories of SLA penalties**

#### **Category A**

- Data loss or theft of data will result in immediate cancellation of the contract
- Successive failures will result in termination of the contract

#### **Category B**

Where problems are identified, the Supplier will implement remedial action immediately following identification at its own cost, and produce a detailed report within 3 working days of the identification of the cause of the problem. The report should detail the remedy and counter measure to prevent future occurrences of the problems.

At the discretion of the Customer, a sum may be withheld from subsequent milestone payments upon failure of that milestone. The sum will be agreed between both parties.

Three failures of a Category B key element will automatically escalate the issue to Category A.

### **Category C**

The Supplier must remedy the problem within 5 working days of identification, at its own cost, and produce a detailed report within 6 working days of the identification of the cause of problem. The report should detail the remedy and counter measure to prevent future occurrences.

Three failures of a category C key element will automatically escalate the issue to category B.

### **13 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](http://www.ukaaf.org).

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

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Notes

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