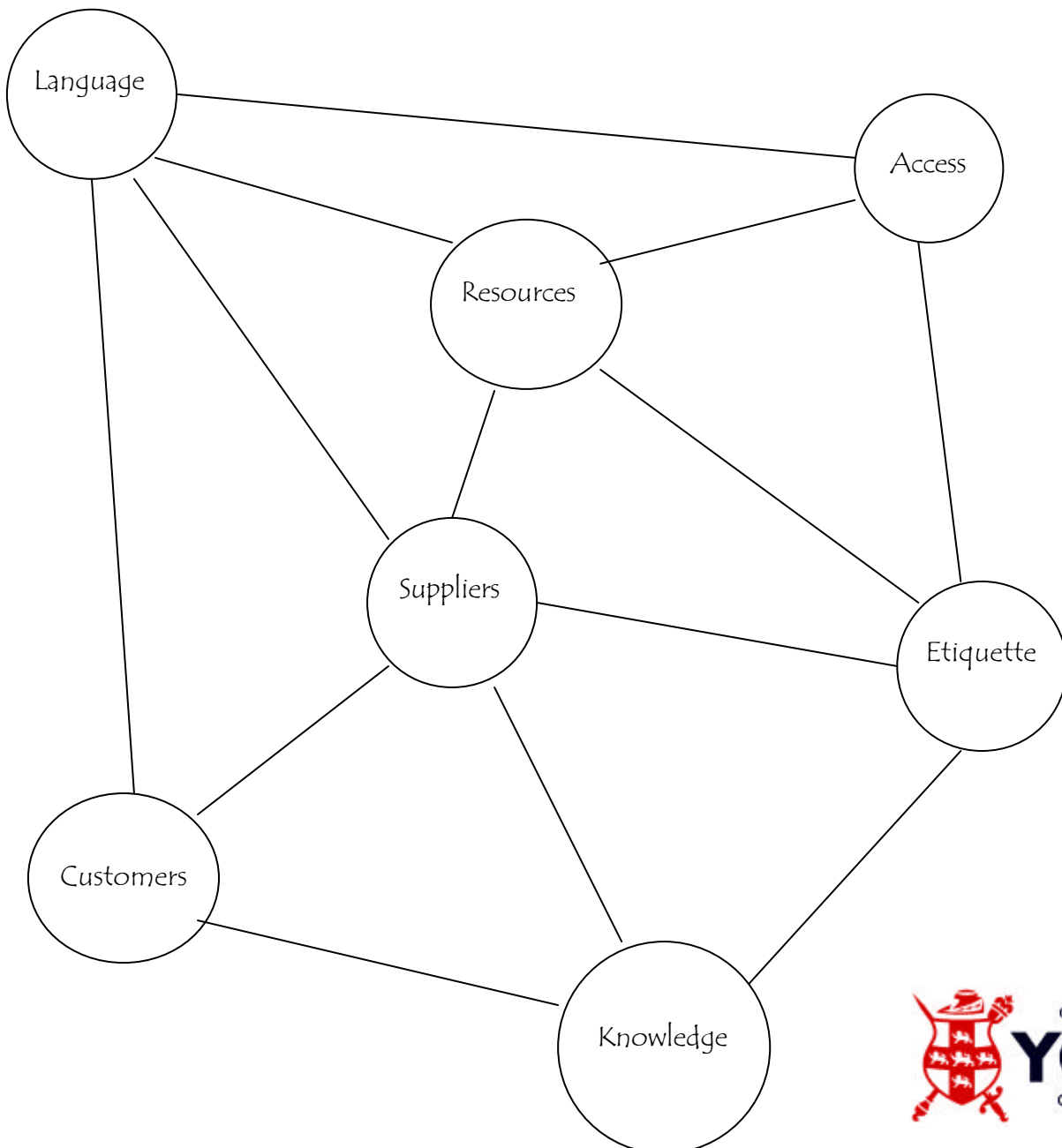


# Making Connections

## How to Make Communication Accessible and Inclusive

City of York Council Policy



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This document was produced by Heather Johnson, Equalities Team, Chief Executive's directorate , in December 2005.

# Introduction

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In our busy lives we are perpetually bombarded with information. At work we receive countless emails and letters every day and are surrounded by posters, notices and labels. On the way to work we might read a newspaper, road signs, bill posters, listen to the radio, make a mobile call. At home we watch TV, open the post, maybe even find time to sit down and talk!

We often take information for granted but what would we do if the TV stopped working, the telephone was disconnected, the post didn't get delivered and newspapers didn't get printed? How would we cope? How would we find out what was going on in the world? How would we know where to go for help?

For many people, for reasons of language barriers or disability, this is a common experience as they are effectively excluded from receiving the information many of us take for granted.

There are for example about eight million people with a significant degree of hearing loss for many of whom using the telephone can be

either very difficult or simply impossible. For many of the two million people with visual impairments reading newspapers and letters is severely hampered by the size and style of print. Even those who can access the information can be excluded by confusing jargon or simply by the English language itself – for the millions of people whose first language is not English.

With a bit of thought and planning we can make our communication much more accessible and inclusive. Writing a leaflet in larger print or putting it on audio tape for example can make all the difference between an elderly person knowing that there is help available to put their bin out on a Thursday morning or struggling with it themselves. Transcribing an application form into Turkish could mean that a disabled person can claim the help with their rent to which they are entitled rather than having to go without.

This document outlines the council's policy for making sure our communications are accessible and inclusive.

# Access to Information and the Law

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The **Disability Discrimination Act** 1995 (DDA) places a duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments and to provide auxiliary aids which make services more accessible to disabled people. Many of the examples of auxiliary aids included in the DDA Codes of Practice are about access to information and how important access to information is in the daily lives of disabled people.

The **Race Relations Amendment Act** 2000 requires all local

authorities to promote good race relations and racial equality. This, in practice, means that we need to assess how our services and policies could be improved so as to have a positive impact on racial equality. Reviews and consultation have indicated we especially need to improve our provision of information in community languages – to increase awareness and understanding of council services by black and minority ethnic groups.

# Our Commitment

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## **Our Policy is ...**

**To treat all customers with courtesy and respect, regardless of their disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion or sexuality.**

**To ask customers about their access and language needs and to meet these as quickly and efficiently as reasonably possible.**

Each service should establish how accessible it is to the public. Access details should be given to the customer when they are invited for a meeting or the service is publicised generally. This could cover information about public transport, parking facilities, the entrance, induction loops, reception desks for example.

The following guidance and policy gives more detail on how to ensure that all our communication is accessible and inclusive. This includes written information, face-to-face meetings, communication via the telephone and electronically.

# Written Information

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## Leaflets and General Information

Our policy is ...

All published written information generally available to the public or service users is to be provided in accessible formats or in a community language on request.

Key pieces of information should be immediately available in accessible formats and community languages.

This policy should be advertised on all leaflets so as to be clearly visible. An example statement could read:

**“This leaflet is about [subject matter]. If you would like this information in an accessible format (for example in large print or by email) or another language please contact telephone XXXXXX, or email XXXX@york.gov.uk”**

Examples of written information that this policy covers include: service information leaflets and

guides, agendas, newsletters and notices.

Accessible formats will usually mean large print, audio tape and electronic formats (eg by e-mail). Accessible formats less frequently requested include BSL video, Braille and Easy Read. Providing information in a community language will usually mean British Sign Language, Urdu, Turkish, Cantonese and Bengali.

Requests for large print, audio tape and electronic formats should in most cases be very simple to meet. However requests for other formats and languages may be harder to

provide. Rather than have the whole document translated or transcribed (given the cost and time it takes) it may be better to offer to explain the information using an interpreter or advocate. A decision should be taken given all the relevant factors, such as:

- the urgency of the situation
- how long it will take to provide the information in the format or language required
- how much it would cost
- the implications for the customer for providing the information verbally/face-to-face rather than in written form.

Every service should also anticipate what information may be requested by customers and in which formats. These key pieces of information should be translated or transcribed in advance so they can be provided as soon as the customer requests them – or disseminated/displayed at the same time as the standard information. Services should frequently review:

- who is the target audience?
- what formats/languages have been requested in the past?
- is this still the key piece of information?

- what has consultation told us about the needs of customers?

### **Example:**

**The Benefits section identifies that information about housing benefit and council tax benefit entitlement are key pieces of information for them to make available in accessible formats and community languages. It decides to produce these in large print, audio tape and in Urdu, Turkish and Bengali. Consultation with the Chinese community later indicates that it should also provide this in Cantonese and Mandarin as well which it includes as an action point in its service plan for the next year.**

All leaflets need to be checked by Marketing and Communications before they are printed. This is to ensure that consistent standards are maintained and information isn't duplicated across the council. Marketing and Communications also deal with all printing of leaflets – contact the Publicity and Print Team on x2044 or x2022 for assistance.

# Correspondence

## Our policy is ...

**All correspondence and forms are to be provided in accessible formats or in a community language on request.**

**Services should ask customers who request information in accessible formats/community languages whether they would like future correspondence to be sent to them in these formats.**

This policy should be advertised on all correspondence so as to be clearly visible. An example statement could read:

**“This [form/letter] is about [subject matter]. If you would like this [application form/letter] in an accessible format (for example in large print or by email) or another language please contact telephone XXXXXX, or email XXXX@york.gov.uk”**

Examples of correspondence this policy covers include: letters, emails, application forms, and service agreements (for example

special educational needs (SEN) statements, care plans).

Accessible formats are the same as in the policy for leaflets, and, again, if the document is long or complicated it may be better to offer to explain the information using an interpreter or advocate.

When a customer requests information in an accessible format or community language you should ask whether they would like future correspondence to be provided in this way automatically (without it having to be requested each time). The service will have to have a means of recording this information

about customers. You should also be clear about which correspondence will and won't be automatically provided in this way.

**Example:**

**Electoral registration staff write to every household inviting people to register to vote. One household asks for this form to be provided in large print. Electoral registration staff do this and ask whether they want it in this format in future years also. The household agrees and so this is recorded on the database and the following year the form is sent in large print automatically.**

# Face to Face

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## **Our policy is ...**

**All services when publicising how to contact a service face to face should include information about accessibility and provision of interpretation.**

**If the service is not accessible then you should offer to meet at a more suitable venue.**

Each service should identify how accessible it is to the public. Access details should be given to the customer when they are invited for a meeting or the service is publicised generally. This could cover information about public transport, parking facilities, the entrance, induction loops, reception desks for example.

### **Example:**

A council advice centre is covered by the Disabled Go website which gives a detailed audit of the building. The key elements of this are given in leaflets and letters that invite people to use the centre for accessing council services and

customers are referred to the web page for more detailed information:

“The [name of service] has level access and automatic entrance doors. The reception area has seating and operates a ticket queuing system. One reception desk is lowered and has an induction loop. The centre is close to several major bus stops [names of roads and routes] and disabled people can park in [name of blue badge parking area] for up to three hours if they display a valid Blue Disabled Parking Badge. Home visits can be arranged on request if needed. For detailed

access information visit  
www.disabledgo.info”

Each service should also think in advance of how it would deal with a member of the public who had limited spoken English. How would you provide an appropriate service if the person came into the office? This could be by using the language skills of staff, using Language Line or arranging an appointment when an interpreter can be present.

Which of these you choose would depend upon the individual requirements of the customers, what notice you were given of their needs and your ability to meet their request.

**Example:**

The council advice centre would also add to its information about contacting the service:

“Please inform us if you have any language needs. We can arrange for an interpreter, either in person or over the telephone, if requested but the more notice you can give us the better.”

If you are organising an event or public meeting you need to think in

advance about the access difficulties that participants may face. Make sure that people are aware of the access arrangements and have an opportunity to request other adjustments. The more prepared you and the participants are the better.

**Example:**

A ward committee meeting is to be held in a parish hall. The publicity for the meeting advises people that: “Papers can be provided in accessible formats and interpreters will be available on request. The venue has an induction loop but has no level access (three steps). If you need adjustments then please contact us as soon as possible and we will try to make suitable arrangements. Telephone XXXXXXX, email [xxxxx@york.gov.uk](mailto:xxxxx@york.gov.uk)”

# Telephones

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## Our policy is ...

**All services when publicising the service telephone number should also indicate how customers can contact the service if:**

- **using a community language interpreter**
- **using a text-telephone**
- **using fax or email.**

Details of how to contact the service in these different ways should be included on all service information leaflets and correspondence.

### **Example:**


CYC Equalities Team

 01904 55 1726

FAX 01904 55 1705

TEXT 01904 551733

 [heather.johnson@york.gov.uk](mailto:heather.johnson@york.gov.uk)

 The Guildhall  
City of York Council  
York, YO1 9QN

Telephone interpretation in community languages is available on request.

Which contact numbers for FAX, Text-telephone and community language interpretation are included will have to be decided for your service. Many services may use the same text-telephone number and fax number for example – possibly at a customer service centre for example. Other services may indicate that text-telephone users should contact the TypeTalk service, quoting the appropriate number and prefix.

However, when deciding what contact details to include you should ensure that whoever will be answering the call knows how to do so (ie use Language Line, a text-

telephone/Type-Talk etc), knows about the service concerned and can respond appropriately.

**Example:**

**A department has a public telephone service for people to report faults or request services. It already can be contacted by post and email**

**as well. To make this accessible to all sections of the community the service trains staff to use Language Line and Type-Talk – and promotes the relevant contact details on leaflets advertising the service.**

# Internet

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## Our policy is ...

**The council's website should meet the highest disability access standards and clearly direct people with language needs to appropriate sources of help.**

### W3C web accessibility

The council's website conforms to the relevant W3C WAI standards.

The W3C Web Accessibility Initiative is the internationally accepted authority on web accessibility standards.

It will conform to Level Double-A - Conformance to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0, including all priority 1 and priority 2 checkpoints defined in the guidelines.

If you require more information on web accessibility contact the council's web team on [web.team@york.gov.uk](mailto:web.team@york.gov.uk).

Any websites that we have involvement in, e.g. partners,

partnerships, contracted out websites or new websites, should also conform to the highest possible level of the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative.

For more information on the council website see the web guidelines on the intranet (Documents and Information > Council > Policies, Standards and Protocol).

### Electronic Forms/Leaflets

Information (for example leaflets or application forms) that is available in alternative languages or formats, such as large print or Easy Read, should be put on the website along with its 'non-alternative' original. If alternative formats are not readily available, but available on request, ensure that relevant contact details

are included on the website so that customers can request alternative formats.

# Changes to the Way People Contact the Council

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## Our policy is ...

**All changes to methods of contacting the council should be reviewed to assess their accessibility for disadvantaged groups before implementation.**

New methods of contacting services or changes to existing services, for example e-mail, telephone, one stop shops, need to be assessed at the planning stage to ensure they are fully accessible.

Any services that are planning to introduce managed call systems such as answerphone or voice mail systems, voice recognition systems or call menus, should carry out an impact assessment before making

any changes, and consult with disadvantaged groups. Alternative arrangements should be provided, and advertised, for people who are unable to use the new systems.

Contact the Equalities Team if you need help and advice on how to do an equalities impact assessment.

Equalities Team – Julian Horsler (55)1704 or Heather Johnson (55)1726.