

Communication and Marketing Guide



Communicating

- Eye contact, in some instances, may be non-existent or appear unusual in comparison to sighted people. In other people it may appear the same as sighted people.
- Always ask someone if there is anything that you can help them with and introduce yourself by using your name even when it is the first time that you have met someone.



- Do not assume that you know what someone may want, let them tell you what they need.
- A visually impaired person who regularly attends the facility may not recognise you (or your voice), especially out of context, so always begin a conversation by introducing yourself and use the person's name if you know it.
- Speak normally and there is no need to avoid words like see, look and watch. Blind and partially sighted people tend to appreciate being treated the same as everyone else.
- Try to avoid non-verbal communication, for example nodding as part of a conversation.
- If you are giving directions to someone then be specific and avoid pointing. For example, say "the access barrier is one metre away and it is directly in front of you", as opposed to "the access barrier is over there."
- Consider using the clock face system with description when communicating with people. For example, "The treadmill is at 10 o'clock and 2 metres away."
- If you're handing them equipment on a table, at reception or somewhere else, describe where it is and navigate their hand if necessary, only after asking if it is ok to do so. Let the person follow your arm down to the equipment, at no point pull someone towards equipment.
- When describing something, try to give a clear word picture, including details such as colour, texture, shape and landmarks if applicable. This helps to build a picture of the environment that people are in.
- If you are leaving the conversation, do let the blind or partially sighted person know you are leaving so they know that you are no longer there.

Marketing and General Communication

A key requirement of the Equality Act is to provide information in accessible formats. Not only is this a key requirement, but it is also sensible that organisations would want to communicate with their members, users and staff in formats that are suitable for them to read. There is a significant chance that by providing material in an accessible format you will see an increase in the number of people using the facilities. Consideration should be given to alternative formats across all your communication platforms, including, but not limited to:

- Website
- Email
- Newsletters
- Social media posts
- Videos
- Other printed material, such as posters, flyers, banners etc

Large text

Creating communication material with larger text can often be beneficial for partially sighted people. Consider formatting your material for use by your members and users, different font sizes are needed by different people. It is generally recognised to use at least font size 14 for Easy Read communications.

Font

Similarly, providing the material in specific fonts may also be requested by your members and users. Some people may require their content in a particular font, however, it is advisable to use Arial unless otherwise informed.



Image descriptions or alt text

An image description or Alt Text is a textual description of images that are present within digital material. An image description is generally a more detailed explanation of an image when compared to Alt text. Blind and partially sighted people may use screen readers to access digital content, which will read the image description or Alt text out loud. Alt text and image descriptions can provide essential information such as text, links, and image details. It is recommended that Alt text be 125 characters or less with image descriptions being slightly longer.

Optimise the website

Websites are often the gateway for people to gather information about your products and services. It is therefore important that your website is as accessible as possible. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (known as WCAG 2.1) are an internationally recognised set of recommendations for improving web accessibility and are based on four design principles:

- Perceivable – to make sure you can recognise it with the senses that you have.
- Operable – to make sure it can be used no matter how it is accessed.
- Understandable – to make sure the content is understandable.
- Robust – to make sure it can be interpreted widely by assistive technology.

The four design principles are aimed at ensuring that websites are created to focus on how people will interact with the content. For example, for blind and partially sighted people this may mean that the website can;

- Allow a screen reader to read the content to someone
- Have different colour contrasts
- Have bigger text
- Use voice commands to navigate a website



You should be familiar with the inclusive access features that your website has, in order that you can advise your blind and partially sighted members and users.

Make the call to action accessible

If through your website, newsletter or social media content, you require some further action from someone, make sure that this call to action is accessible. This might be registering for an exercise class or buying a membership.

Make sure that any online forms are laid out in a logical manner and clearly highlight what information is required by the user.

Audio description

Videos are a great way to launch new products or services to your customers. They are increasingly used in social media posts and within digital newsletters. To make sure that your videos are accessible consider creating an alternative inclusive version that includes audio description. Audio description is the verbal description of the visual elements that appear in videos. The aim of audio description is to provide verbal information on the visual content that is essential to understand what is on the screen. Often audio descriptions occur in sections of a video where there is no audio provided in the original video.

Representative imagery

Using imagery that represents blind and partially sighted people, in communication and marketing materials such as videos, social media, case studies and posters, demonstrates that you are inclusive. It helps to normalise the idea of their attendance in the minds of staff and facility users.