Achieving access for all

A guide for staff of Croydon Council to equality for disabled people

Clear print Alternative Text formats Clear Text Guide Disability Etiquette The Disability Discrimination Act Using Correct Language and **Equality** Terminology Disability Protocol Facts Common Courtesies Offering Assistance Communicating with people who are deaf or hard of hearing Assisting blind and partially sighted people Assisting people who use crutches, sticks or wheelchairs People with speech impairments Supporting people with learning disabilities Interviewing disabled people Organising a meeting or event

CROYDON COUNCIL
Equalities

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Achieving Equality for all

Croydon Council's Commitment to Disabled People

It is widely accepted that disabled people have fewer opportunities and a lower quality of life than non-disabled people. The social model of disability worked out by disabled people, drawing on their own experiences, demonstrates that in reality most barriers to inclusion are a result of the way society is organised rather than caused by disabled peoples' impairments.

Croydon Council has adopted the social model of disability. We believe that negative attitudes and lack of awareness are the main barriers to disabled people achieving full equality.

The Council also recognises that disabled people can be excluded further due to the their ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation and/or age. The Council's work towards achieving equality for disabled people will take into account the extra discrimination that disabled people experience on these grounds.

We are committed to working towards removing barriers which exclude disabled people through:-

- Examining our own policies, practices and procedures for potential discrimination.

- Advising and supporting all departments on the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act.

- Promoting greater awareness amongst Council staff, contractors and partners of ways of overcoming these barriers to inclusion and

- Working with those organisations and individuals who share our values to achieve change.

In particular we will:

- Continue to support groups run by and for disabled people.

- Work closely with the Mobility Forum to make Croydon a more accessible borough for people with disabilities and older people.

- Implement the recommendations of the Best Value Review on access to services by people with a disability.

- Ensure staff have appropriate guidance and training on providing equal access to information and services.

- Continue to consult with disabled staff and service users to monitor progress on meeting our commitments.

- Continue the programme of work aimed at ensuring all the Council's buildings which are open to the public, meet the requirements for physical access by the end of 2004.

Disability Protocol

A Guide for Croydon Council Employees on meeting, working and communicating with disabled people

Produced by the Direct Payment Support Service and disabled members of the Direct Payments User Group for Croydon Council, Equalities Unit.

About this Guide

Disabled people have a right to expect quality service, which is non-discriminatory. This is the philosophy of

Access for All

which has now been reinforced through

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Disability Protocol

The Disability Discrimination Act

introduced new laws and measures aimed at ending the discrimination which many disabled people face. The Act makes it unlawful for employers to treat disabled people less favourably than someone else because of their disability, unless there is a good reason. The Council, as a provider of services, has a responsibility under the Act to treat disabled people no less favourably than they treat other people.

This Guide is designed to help Croydon Council staff to understand and implement best practice for disabled people whether as job applicants, employees or service users.

The Guide also aims to raise awareness and give practical advice about many aspects of communication, both in daily life and in the workplace with people with physical, sensory and learning disability.

Using Correct Language and Terminology

The use of language is constantly changing. The best way to demonstrate awareness and to avoid offence is to keep in touch with disabled people and to respect their preferences. Each person with a disability is, first and foremost, an individual, so avoid group phrases like, 'The disabled' use instead ' People with Disabilities' or 'Disabled people'. Don't describe a disabled person in terms of a condition.

Some words and phrases may cause offence. For example 'The handicapped'. Many people with disabilities find this an offensive term because it may imply that they cannot function on a par with others. Others words refer to the person in terms of their condition: spastic, epileptic, cripples, victims of….., invalid, mental handicap, wheelchair bound. Words that are less likely to cause offence: a wheelchair user, someone who has cerebral palsy, a person with epilepsy, someone with learning difficulties.

Disability Protocol

Many people recognise the environment causes problems for many people with mobility or sensory disabilities. Consistently, disabled people report that – whilst an accessible environment and well considered facilities are important to meeting their needs – of equal importance is the attitude, knowledge and consideration of staff.

Patronising behaviour by staff is offensive, potentially discriminatory and could lead to a claim against the Council and/or employees under the 'Disability Discrimination Act 1995'.

By recognising this, and by understanding the feelings of disabled people themselves, employees can do much to guard against unintentional discrimination in recruitment and service delivery.

Some Facts

■ There are over 8 million disabled people in the UK, roughly 1 in 8 of the population.

■ More than 50% are of working age.

■ 1 out of every 4 consumers in the UK is either disabled or has a disabled person in their immediate circle.

Remember:

■ Being disabled is not the same as being ill. Most disabled people are perfectly well.

■ People with disabilities don't always have problems getting around. Less then 5% use wheelchairs.

■ You can't always tell if a person is disabled just by looking at them. Some people may have disabilities that you can't see, such as deafness or people with learning difficulties.

Disability Protocol

Common Courtesies

Most disabled people are unlikely to need any more assistance than anyone else. Many service users may have disabilities that are not obvious until they approach you. For example you cannot always tell instantly if a person is deaf or partially sighted.

The key is to respond normally and in the manner in which you would like to treated.

■ If you think a customer may need assistance, ask them before you do anything.

■ If they do need assistance, always ask them the best way to help and listen carefully to any instructions before acting.

■ Never talk down to a disabled person as though you were talking to a child. This is particularly important for people who have learning difficulties.

■ Never lean on or grab a person's wheelchair without their permission. Generally, if they want help they will ask for it.

■ Remember to always talk to a disabled person directly, not though friends or companions.

■ Remember that a disabled person's wheelchair is part of their 'body space'

■ In the case of guide dog users, never refer to the dog first or attempt to feed the dog treats without the permission of the owner.

■ Don't be embarrassed about using common expressions when talking to disabled people. It really is not unusual to hear a blind person say: 'I'll see you later, then'.

■ Make sure you are aware of all facilities for disabled service users, so you can respond to any enquiries honestly and efficiently.

Offering Assistance

■ Most disabled people will not need any extra help or assistance.

■ The most common reason for needing assistance will be the physical layout of the building. This could be for several reasons from such things as poorly lit signs, through to steps and heavy doors.

■ Like everybody else, disabled people are all individuals – some of whom will be quite confident in approaching you to ask for assistance. Others may be reluctant, embarrassed or less confident about asking for your help.

■ If you think a disabled person may need assistance, the best thing to do is ask them a simple question such as 'Is there anything I can do to help?' or 'Would you like some assistance?'

■ Until you have asked the disabled person, never assume what help is required. Remember it is perfectly acceptable for them to turn down your offer of assistance if it is not required.

Communicating with people who are deaf or hard of hearing

Remember there are different degrees and types of deafness, and different ways for deaf people to communicate. In general, many people have faint or distorted hearing, some have no useful hearing at all. Many can join in a conversation by using a hearing aid or lip reading and some use sign language. When you meet a person who is deaf or hard of hearing always:

■ Speak at a normal pace, allow a little more time, and be aware the listener needs to look at your face as you talk.

■ Always try to position yourself so your face can be seen clearly, particularly when using a glass–fronted kiosk.

■ When talking to a deaf person who lip-reads, look directly at them to make communication easier. Always try to keep your hand away from your face as this hinders effective lip-reading.

■ Background noise can make it difficult for people who use a hearing aid; it distorts and blurs sound. Be prepared to repeat yourself if the person cannot hear you clearly.

■ Try not to raise your voice as you speak as this actually distorts speech and makes it harder to understand.

■ Do not panic if you are not immediately understood; try re-phrasing your sentence, cut out any long or unusual words.

■ Always speak face to face when addressing a person who has hearing difficulties.

■ If necessary, write things down. This may be useful if the person uses sign language. Ordinary facial expressions and gestures may help to get your message across.

■ Always make sure you have the deaf person's attention before speaking.

■ Always talk directly to the deaf person not their friend or colleague.

■ Where loop systems are installed they must be regularly and professionally tested. It is important to repair items promptly when they are found to be faulty.

Assisting blind and partially sighted people

Most partially sighted people use neither a guide dog nor a white cane. This is because most blind or partially sighted people retain a degree of useful vision.

The difficulties most likely to be encountered are low light levels that significantly reduce the vision they have. As a result, some visually impaired people may need assistance in finding their way around.

■ Look out for people using a white cane, or with a guide dog.

A red band on a white cane indicates that the person is also deaf or hard of hearing.

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- Identify yourself clearly and politely, when introducing yourself.

- If you suspect that a person is blind or partially sighted, **ask if they require assistance**.

- When giving change to a visually impaired person always **count out the money as you hand it to them**.

- If you think the person might need help on unfamiliar ground, say: 'Let me offer you my arm'. **Never grab a blind person's arm to guide them**.

- Think before you give directions to a person who is partially sighted.

- When offering a seat, place the person's hand on the back or arm of the chair.

- Remember not to leave the person talking to an empty space. Say if you are going to move away.

- As you guide them, describe your surroundings and potential obstacles (e.g., Approach of stairs or doors)

- Speak normally and clearly without shouting. Do not point but give clear verbal instructions.

- Describe the location of the destination in relation to Emergency Exit(s) and the procedure for evacuation.

- When a blind person purchases food or drink, place or hold the items in front of them and explain where they are in relation to the person's hands.

- Many blind people are familiar with the clock method for locating items, e.g. your drink is at 1.00 o'clock.

Assisting people who use crutches, sticks or wheelchairs

- For some stick or crutch users, stairs may be difficult. Where you have alternative access for wheelchair users, consider asking if when using sticks or crutches they would find this alternative access more convenient.

- People who need sticks or crutches may find it hard to use their hands when standing up, for example, to count money, or to fill in a form.

- Remember that counters may be too high for wheelchair users to reach. Where this is the case, you may need to come around to the front of the counter to provide the service required.

- Don't lean on the person's wheelchair. It's part of the body space of the person using it.

- If there are different arrangements for evacuating a wheelchair user in case of emergency, ensure that you explain the procedure clearly to them.

- If the building has alternative access for wheelchair users, make sure you can explain the arrangements to any customer who telephones for information in advance.

- If possible when talking to a service user in a wheelchair, try to crouch down so that you are at the same eye – level to avoid the person getting a stiff neck.

People with speech impairments

Some people have speech impairments that may make it difficult for you to understand precisely what they are trying to say. The key is to listen carefully and concentrate on what the person is trying to say.

■ Concentrate fully on the person who is talking to you.

■ Be patient if you do not understand at first.

■ Resist the temptation to interrupt and finish sentences for the person.

■ Try to ask questions that require short answers, or even a nod or shake of the head.

■ If you are still not certain, it is important to repeat and confirm what you believe has been said.

■ If all else fails ask the person if they will write down what they are trying to say.

■ Never pretend that you have understood when you have not. This can lead to a range of embarrassing situations for you as well as the customer.

Supporting people with learning disabilities

■ For the majority of people with learning disabilities, there will be no need to offer any additional support. But some may have difficulty in reading or understanding signs, price lists or other information. In addition, many learning disabled people experience difficulty in understanding or using money.

■ Always speak directly to the person, even if a companion replies.

■ Never treat an adult with a learning disability like a child.

■ Speak clearly and be prepared to repeat things if you were not understood the first time.

■ If necessary, write your message and suggest the person shows it to a friend or family member, include you name and telephone number, and suggest the person speaks to you another time.

■ Always count out change when handing it to a person with a learning disability

Disability Protocol

Interviewing disabled people

■ Only ask questions about your customer's disability if it is relevant. Before you ask questions about someone's life, ask yourself whether you would put this question to any other customer or client.

■ Don't assume your customer can't do certain tasks. Disabled people often develop new ways of tackling everyday challenges.

■ Form your own judgements from discussions with the people themselves, as you would with anyone else. Don't rely on third parties.

Organising a meeting or event

Before organising a meeting or an event, think about the following:

■ The venue should be totally accessible to people with physical or sensory impairment. For example, there must be a level or ramp entrance into the building, hearing loop installed in the meeting room and, if needed, provision should be made for signers to attend.

■ If you think there may be access problems, let the person know and discuss a possible solution.

■ Check that car parking spaces near to the building are available.

■ Ensure suitable toilet facilities are available within the building.

■ When inviting people always ask them to tell you if they have any specific requirements.

■ Always ensure written materials are available in other formats, i.e. large print, Braille, audio cassette, etc.

■ Arrangements should be made for guide dog toileting and watering when the user is in an event or meeting.

■ Helpers may be needed for wheelchair users and others.

■ Check exit and egress and other emergency fire evacuation procedures.

See the Council guide on organising a conference or other public meeting for full guidance

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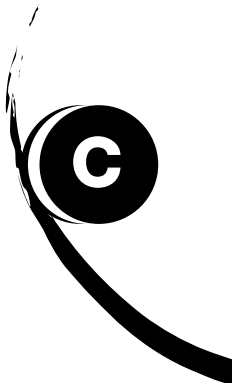
Making Information Accessible

Far too often, when communicating with other people, we forget that the way we communicate is not accessible to everyone. Failing to recognise this may not only result in a breach of the Disability Discrimination Act but also breach the Human Rights Act. This guide outlines ways in which we can avoid causing embarrassment and offence as well as ensuring that information is accessible to as many people as possible.

Those who may have specific requirements:

- People with visual impairments
- People who are registered blind
- People who are hard of hearing
- People who use a hearing aid
- People who are profoundly deaf
- People with a learning disability
- People who speak English as a second language
- People with dyslexia
- People with other reading difficulties
- People with "colour blindness"
- People with mental health issues.

The following brief guides give some basic information on how we can make Council letters, leaflets etc more widely accessible but as a first step remember the following:

- Check with the person or group your are communicating with if there are any access requirements.
- Plan the text formats you will need before printing publicity.
- Always budget for accessible formats when preparing publicity.
- Seek advice don't assume.
- Clearly display how to obtain text in alternative formats.
- Clearly display access facilities at reception desks etc., (e.g. availability of induction loop).
- If not on "typetalk" include a minicom and fax number on information and publicity.

Detailed information on communicating with people who have a visual impairment is available free from the RNIB at: www.seeitright@rnib.org.uk

Making text accessible

Most people who have a visual impairment, including the majority of those who are registered blind, can read text if we present it in the right way. Advances in new technology have now also opened up more ways of presenting text to people who have no sight at all.

Clear print

- All text should be in a minimum of 12pt and Ariel font. This is accessible to the majority of people with visual impairments and therefore reduces the requirement for large print requests. This meets RNIB guidelines also.

- Ensure there is always a good contrast between print and background paper. When using coloured paper or background tints these should be very pale with a dark print. Black print on white or yellow background is the most accessible.

- Use matt paper. Glossy (art) paper reflects light and can make print difficult to read.

- Use uppercase letters sparingly. A couple of words for a heading are OK but not for body text.

- Reverse (negative) print can be used but the font type should be strong such as Ariel or Univers. Some people with specific visual impairments prefer this.

- Align left for text, this keeps spacing even. Don't justify or split words at the end of a line.

- Line length should ideally be about 50-65 characters. Some blind or partially sighted people may prefer less.

- Where using columns ensure the margins clearly separate the text or, where space is limited, use a vertical line between columns.

Alternative Text formats

- Using e-mail or computer diskette is the most easily accessible format for many blind or partially sighted people. In Rich Text Format (RTF) and with the right computer programmes it can be converted into speech or enlarged to a personally accessible point size.

- All text documents should be capable of being reproduced in 16 –22 point sizes.

- Information on computer diskette or computer file can easily be converted into braille.

- Text read onto audio tape is accessible not only by people with a visual impairment but also people with a learning disability, dyslexia or other reading difficulty. It can also be read into community languages other than English.

- Braille is a system of raised dots which is used by blind people who need to read text silently or to be used in meetings.

Making text accessible
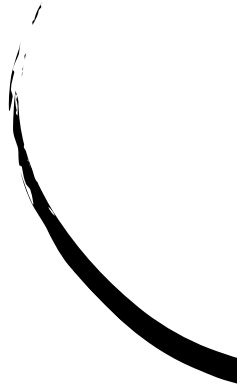
- Moon, a system of raised curves and lines, is used by a very small number of people, mostly elderly. It is easier to learn but even bulkier than braille.

- Video tape is a very accessible format for people with a learning disability. Where a video tape is produced for general access it should be subtitled and signed.

- CD –Rom is also a very widely accessible format.

- The internet is an area of access used by people with a visual impairment and of course also makes information more accessible to people with mobility impairments.

- Plans and maps can be printed in raised outline through RNIB.

- The telephone is accessible to most visually impaired people.

- All printed information should be available on request in large print, braille or audio-tape and in languages other than English. For information and advice contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 020 8407 1369.

Clear Text Guide

- Always use plain language and where possible keep text as simple as possible.

- Where technical terms cannot be avoided explain these.

- Keep text clearly separated from graphics and/or artwork.

- Include picture or symbol formats where possible. This helps to make the information more accessible to people with reading difficulties.

- Keep sentences to one point of information. Avoid long sentences. This helps people with memory or concentration difficulties.

- Keep paragraphs short, about 5 – 7 lines and to one subject.

- Do not use jargon or acronyms.

Making yourself heard

Access to information is not just about the printed word. Much information is communicated verbally. For those who are deaf or have a hearing impairment this can result in receiving inaccurate information or no information at all.

- All offices should have a minicom line or be on typetalk.
- All information should be in text as well as verbal formats. This is especially important at reception desks.
- Where videos are being used to convey information these should include subtitles and preferably be signed as well.
- All reception desks should have a loop system which is clearly signed. Where there is more than one desk in close proximity this may not be possible but visitors must be able to access all information from a desk with a loop.
- There should always be a minimum of one interview room with a loop system in any public contact area.
- Offer the use of a confidential room if personal information may be discussed. With a hard of hearing person you may have to speak louder resulting in information being overheard at a reception desk. Information may also be picked up by other hearing aid users through the loop system.
- When inviting people to an interview or meeting, publicise access facilities such as loop systems.
- If you know in advance that a visitor has a hearing impairment ask how they would prefer to communicate. British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters should be booked through the Translating and Interpreting Service tel: 8407 1369.
- If using an interpreter always speak to the individual, not the interpreter.
- Make sure a deaf person is looking at you before speaking, a gentle touch on the shoulder or arm will attract attention.
- Keep your hands away from your mouth and always face the person when speaking. The person may be lip-reading. This ensures you can be understood without the person having to specifically inform you they are lip-reading.
- Face the light don't sit back to the window or light.
- Do not shout. Speak clearly with a normal rhythm.
- In a meeting always speak one at a time.
- If you are talking to deaf and hearing people, don't forget the deaf people.
- When interviewing always have a pen and paper with you. Written notes may help you clarify information.
- Any open presentation, roadshow, exhibition or public meeting should have a signer or palantype operator present. See Checklist for Organising a Conference. (Palantype is more suitable for conference style meetings than roadshows).

More detailed information on communicating with hard of hearing, deaf and deafblind people is available from the RNID website at: www.rnid.org.uk

Improving access for people with a learning disability

Learning disability covers a wide range of differing abilities. As with other disabilities do not assume someone can or cannot access information. Be guided by them. Follow the guidelines on making text accessible.

Also:

- Use drawings, pictures or widely recognised symbols, to illustrate information. Remember to keep graphics to the right side of the page. Using pictures, like a storyboard, can be very useful.

- There is a special Wigit software programme called 'Writing with Symbols' for people with a learning disability. It is therefore better used for targeted information not general information. The recipient usually needs to be supported by a named person or key worker.

- Hand signs, taken from the Makaton and Singalong vocabularies, are used by many people with a learning disability and/or a hearing impairment. These can help a person to understand information more easily.

- Putting information on video can be especially helpful. It can help with understanding and retaining the information being given.

- Some people with a learning disability can find meeting a strange person or a strange environment especially stressful. If interviewing someone with a learning disability do not rush them. Allow them the time and space to express themselves. Being welcoming and informal can also help the person relax and gain confidence in you.

- If inviting someone with a learning disability to a meeting, arrange for a named person to meet them, at least on arrival. This will help to overcome any anxiety.

- Give information in a clear manner using commonly used language not jargon. If technical terms have to be used be ready to explain.

- At the end of an interview go through what you have discussed. Write the information down and give to them. Some people with a learning disability can have difficulty remembering what they have been told or may not have fully understood.

Improving access for people with Mental Health issues

About one in four people will have some form of mental illness in their lifetime. Mental illness can impact on a person's ability to access information and even physical mobility. The guidance on making text accessible will help people with mental health issues.

Most of the time people with a mental health issue will have no different requirements than anyone else. However if you suspect that someone may be unwell at the time the following may be helpful:

- Breaking information up into bullet points or "bite size" chunks. This is more likely to encourage someone to read the text. A whole page of text is very off putting.

- Offer the opportunity for a meeting. It may be more effective to speak to the person than send them a letter or leaflet.

- Meetings early in the morning can be inaccessible, ask what time would be suitable for them.

- When meeting someone with a mental health issue remember that anxiety can make the impact of their illness greater;

  - Arrange meetings with a named person and confirm in writing

  - Allow the person time to compose him or herself

  - Do not rush them or become impatient

  - Do not be judgmental about behaviour which may appear inappropriate to you

  - Don't assume challenging behaviour will lead to violence. The person may not be able to control their feelings. Remain calm and patient, don't become aggressive

  - Write down information or if you are handing over a letter or leaflet, go through it with them.

OHP or Powerpoint Presentations

It is important to remember when using OHP slides or Powerpoint that people with Visual Impairments may find it difficult or impossible to read the information on the screen. The following guidance will help to overcome this.

- Limit the amount of text per slide and use a large, bold Ariel or other Helvetica type print. About 20 - 30 words per slide is a useful guide.

- Think how graphics such as pie charts, graphs or other graphics will be presented. Unless it can be easily read from a distance it may be more appropriate to just keep this information to a text format.

- When using Powerpoint make sure there is a clear colour and tone contrast between text and background.

- Don't use fancy font styles, artwork or text moving about, or in and out. Ensure there is time for the text to be read slowly before moving on to the next slide.

- Always read out everything that is on the screen.

- The text in all Powerpoint handouts should be in a minimum of Ariel 12pt.

- Put text of OHP or powerpoint presentations onto diskette for easy transcription into large print or braille.

Code of Good Practice

- **Plan ahead**

- **Do not make assumptions**

- **Consult disabled users, staff and organisations**

- **Ensure staff are trained on disability awareness**

- **Audit barriers to access**

- **Ensure access requirements are included within budgets**

- **Publicise adjustments and other access aids**

- **Monitor access to the service**

- **Regularly review accessibility of service**

- **Don't promise what can't be provided**

Organising a conference, seminar or other public meeting

Checklist for accessibility

1. Planning the conference/meeting

- Facilities for disabled people should be at the top of the agenda during the initial planning process.

- Ensure all access requirements are costed and included within the budget.

- All meetings, conferences or other events to which the public are invited should provide sign language interpretation.

- Book sign language interpreters as far in advance of the date as possible (where the event is due to last more than 45 mins, 2 signers must be booked) – see section 6.

- Venues for conferences or other public events must meet the following minimum standards.

2. Arranging the venue

- Check that access to and within the venue is level.

- Where there are steps or other changes of level, check that there is a ramp, stair lift or passenger lift suitable for people using electric and manually propelled wheelchairs. Check that lift buttons are accessible from a wheelchair.

- Are doors on automatic openers? Which way do they open? Where there are manually opened doors check that there will be someone to assist with opening if the doors cannot be fixed open.

- If a stage, platform or other raised area is to be used for speakers, check that a ramp with a maximum rise of 1:12 and minimum width of 1000mm can be provided.

- Does the venue have accessible toilets? Can they be reached on the level or by ramp or lift? Accessible toilets should be on the same floor as the event or at very least in the same building. Are they well signed, do they work and is access ensured?

  NB: A venue with no accessible toilet is not accessible.

- Does the venue have an induction loop? Ensure a few days before the event that it is working and on the day that it is switched on.

- The seating area should allow for aisles wide enough for wheelchairs to access comfortably and seats removable to accommodate wheelchair users alongside friends etc.

- Check that facilities around the building are clearly signed i.e. Print is black, on contrasting background and at eye level.

- Check that parking is available on the level, within 50 metres of the entrance and, where appropriate, there are rop kerbs.

- Do not rely on venue staff to confirm these facilities. Arrange a visit to the venue to check for yourself.

- Where adjustments have to be made, to ensure reasonable access for disabled people, these should not be at an extra cost.

- seminar/workshops are part of the event check that these rooms meet access standards.

3. Arranging speakers

- Ask speakers if they are aware of the social model of disability and disability etiquette and make them aware that Croydon Council prefers to use the social model. If not send them the brief outline of the social model and some basic guidance on disability etiquette in the appendix to this guide.

- Check if speakers have any access and dietary requirements.

- Ask speakers to provide a brief outline of their speeches including any technical terms about 2 weeks before the conference so these can be passed on to signers.

- If using OHP or Powerpoint provide speakers with guidance at Appendix B

- Ask speakers to provide handouts etc (preferably on computer diskette), in advance, in Ariel 12pt. so these can be transcribed onto tape, large print etc.

4. Publicising the meeting:

- Leaflets/posters advertising the meeting should meet minimum print standards. The typeface should be bold and have a clear contrast with the background. No fancy font styles or printing over artwork.

- Matt card or paper should be used for leaflets or posters.

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- All publicity should prominently state how to obtain information in alternative formats.

- If it is not possible to meet the 12pt minimum print size for all print on leaflets, how to obtain the leaflet in large print format or on diskette, tape or braille should be in at least 12pt, and preferably larger, on the front page.

- All publicity should be available, on request, in large print (minimum 16pt) on diskette, tape or braille.

- Where the notice of conference/ meeting includes a registration form a facility for notifying access requirements should be included on the form. This should include:

  - Written materials in large print, on tape, braille or diskette and whether translation into a community language is required (excludes braille)

  - Dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian, gluten free, Kosher, Halal)

  - Sign language interpretation (BSL sign language interpreters should be booked as a matter of course but individuals may need to be seated near the front, or to one side of the hall, to access this)

  - A telephone number and named person(s) to ring to discuss access requirements

  - Registration should be available by phone, tape or e-mail.

5. Joining information

All participants should be sent a guide to access the venue and other facilities. This should include:

- Public transport, road and pedestrian directions to the building.

- Parking arrangements and access to the building including location of ramps, lifts, automatic opening doors and direction of door opening.

- How to locate toilets and other facilities within the building (highlighting location of accessible toilets) and whether access is level or via lift, ramp etc.

- Any seating arrangements to access loop or signer.

- Buffet/refreshment arrangements and location within building.

- If workshops are part of the event, access to and facilities at these rooms.

- All conference/meeting papers should be in a minimum of Arial 12pt and available in accessible formats.

6. Booking signers

- Signers should be booked through the Council's Interpreting and Translation Service (tel: 020 8407 1369). Charges are made for signing.

- Where attendance is by open invitation signers must be booked.

- For events which are by specific invitation, the invite must provide for notification of requirement for sign language interpretation. Signers should be at least provisionally booked until it is certain that they are no longer needed.

- Unless the meeting provides for short breaks at least every 45 minutes, two signers should be booked. For conferences at least two signers must be booked.

7. Arranging refreshments

- Check that caterers can provide for specific dietary requirements such as Halal, Kosher, gluten free.

- If participants state they have specific dietary requirements contact the person for information you can pass on to the caterer (e.g. requirements on food preparation).

- Ensure that the refreshment area has sufficient room for people with visual or mobility impairments to move round easily.

- Arrange for some tables and chairs to be available for people who need to sit or need to rest their plate or cup.

- Ensure help is available, it is very difficult to sign and hold a plate and glass of wine.

- Ensure that food for a buffet is labelled e.g. beef, chicken, pork etc, not just meat and that vegetarian, halal, kosher etc food is separate and labelled (vegan food should also be identifiable from vegetarian).

8. Final checks

- About a week before the conference check the loop system is working, if possible take a hearing aid user with you to do this.

- Ensure that reception staff (yours and/or the venue's) are aware that disabled people will be attending and are aware of any assistance required and disability etiquette.

- Ensure that any other adjustments required by the venue have been made or will be available on the day.

- Check with caterers that they are clear about dietary requirements.

- Ensure that speakers notes have been sent to the signers.

- Ensure that you have handouts/agendas/conference packs in the accessible formats requested.

Disability Etiquette (Appendix A)

The Social Model of Disability has been defined by disabled people themselves to more accurately reflect the real barriers disabled people face.

The social model recognises that in the main it is the attitudes of non-disabled people and society generally which creates the barriers not the impairment of the disabled person.

The Medical Model views the disability as having an impact on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities which in turn creates the barriers. The medical model therefore creates a view of dependency by the disabled person. The medical model also fails to recognise that disabled people often develop different ways of carrying out those activities.

Language: certain words or phrases can give offence. The general rule is to not use phrases which suggest that disabled people are always frail, need pity or charity.

- Use the term disabled people or people with a disability, not "the disabled". The opposite of disabled is non-disabled not able-bodied.

- Don't use terms such as "the blind"," the deaf"," the mentally ill" etc, use instead terms such as blind people or people with mental health problems. This avoids implying that disabled people belong to a uniform group separate from society.

- Say wheelchair user never wheelchair bound or confined to a wheelchair. Wheelchairs are a liberating device and mobility aid. Also avoid terms such as wheelchair athlete – it is the wheelchair user who is the athlete not the wheelchair.

- Always say someone with.../ someone who has ... never victim of.../ crippled by ... suffers from.../ afflicted by... or "an invalid".

  e.g. Peter who has epilepsy - not Peter, an epileptic or who suffers from epilepsy.

- Do not use terms such as spastic, handicapped, cripple, retarded, mentally defective even if there are no disabled people present.

- The term "mental handicap" has been replaced by the term learning disability or learning difficulty. These are the terms acceptable to people with a learning disability (difficulty).

- Say deaf without speech not deaf and dumb.

- For more information on "etiquette" refer to the Council's Disability Protocol.

Achieving access for all

**These guidelines were adopted by Croydon Council Equalities
& Community Partnerships Cabinet Committee on 18 November 2002**

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