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‘See it Right’ Clear Print Guidelines

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INTRODUCTION

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has a legal obligation, under the Disability Discrimination Act parts III and IV, as replaced by the Equality Act 2010, to provide goods, services and facilities to the public in the most accessible way it can.

Since our publications are aimed at an audience that would include visually impaired people we need to ensure visual clarity of information. This includes **all** written information that we distribute to the public, whether it's a mass-produced leaflet, a personal letter or a Council tax reminder.

We should also be prepared to provide information in a large font size and in other relevant formats, including Braille, tape, disk, BSL video, through our website, in plain language, and in pictorial form for people with learning difficulties.

Good standards of print legibility help all readers, but for many people with a visual impairment the issue is crucial to whether they read or not. It is important to recognise that blind and partially sighted people have different eye conditions and what they see can greatly differ. It is almost impossible to devise a 'print standard' that will meet all needs, but following the recommendations of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) the Council has corporately adopted the use of Ariel font with point 12 as a minimum size.

These guidelines are designed to assist everyone in understanding the needs of our customers who are visually impaired or blind. They also aim to describe a few, inexpensive, common sense steps that can be taken to improve accessibility of information for all our customers.

CONTRAST

An important factor affecting legibility is the contrast between the type and the paper on which it is printed (or photocopied). Contrast is affected by paper colour, printing inks, type size and weight, all of which are considered in this document.

Black type on white or yellow paper gives a very good contrast. If you wish to use paper in other colours, or to print text on top of tints, the background colours selected must be very pale.

Printing ink, if not black, should be as dark as possible – for example, green, blue, reds and browns can be acceptable if dark ink is used and the background is very pale. Never use yellow printing inks; they are as good as invisible. Avoid pale colours on coloured backgrounds – for example grey on blue.

Do not be tempted to run type across a photograph or illustration. This limits the contrast and confuses the eye.

REVERSALS OF TYPE (WHITE OUT OF BLACK)

White type on black or another dark colour is acceptable, provided that the typeface, size and weight are suitable. Avoid reversing out small type sizes and light faces because they tend to fill with ink and become indistinct.

This is what is meant by reverse type

TYPE SIZE/FACE

Divisions should bear in mind that type size can improve legibility. For the general reader the RNIB recommend 12-point Arial and this is the typeface that the Council has now adopted. The text of this document is printed in Arial 12 point and the titles are 14-point Arial Bold. Documents written in Arial 14 point can be read by over 96% of the population, and reduce the need for alternative formats. The RNIB use a minimum 14-point for material intended for blind or partially sighted readers. The use of typeface larger than 20 point is of no advantage.

If you print documents with numbers in them, it is important to ensure the numerals are as distinct as possible. Blind and partially sighted people can easily misread 3, 5, and 8 in some typefaces, and even 0 and 6. (Think about using letters instead of numbers.)

TYPE WEIGHT

This is almost as important as the size in determining legibility. Light typefaces should be avoided, especially in smaller sizes. Blind and partially sighted people may need medium or bold type weights; even 'regular' weights may prove inadequate contrast between the type and the background.

SPACING

Stick to even word spacing, justified left only. Do not condense or stretch lines of type or, worse, single words, to fit your line length. Leave reasonable space between lines of type.

LINE LENGTH

This should ideally be in the range of 50 – 65 characters. Blind and partially sighted people may prefer even shorter lines than this. Avoid splitting words at the end of lines. This sentence has fifty-three characters with spaces.

PAPER

Print on glossy paper can be difficult to read because it reflects too much light. Very thin, semi-transparent can cause problems because text can show through on the reverse.

CAPITAL LETTERS

These are harder to read than lower case letters. Although a word or two may present no serious difficulties, capitals should be avoided for continuous text.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

This is very important as a page of close-set type easily daunts readers. Layouts should therefore be simple and clear:

- Leave space between paragraphs and don't cram the page.
- If you are setting text in double columns, make sure the margin between columns clearly separates the two columns. If space is limited, use a vertical rule to separate columns.
- It helps to provide good 'navigational' aids for the reader – for example a contents list, clearly differentiated headings, rules to separate unrelated sections, minimal underlining – anything which makes the layout easy to follow.
- RNIB prefers to avoid fitting text around illustrations, as this results in different line lengths.
- It is also worth noting that, on forms, blind and partially sighted people often need generous space to fill in details that have to be hand-written; their writing tends to be larger than average.

COLOUR BLINDNESS

Red – Green colour blindness (where both colours appear to be the same) affects 10 percent of men, but rarely occurs in women.

In one form of red-green blindness, red, orange, green and yellow all appear the same.

Another form of colour blindness occurs when there is a confusion of red with brown, green – brown and yellow – brown.

People who are colour blind cannot distinguish green from blue, rose from grey or pink from yellow.