Communicating Effectively

A guide for inclusive communication

Arabic

هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.

Hindi

अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है

Punjabi

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਰਾਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

Urdu

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Chinese (Cantonese)

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Polish

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku lub w formacie audio.

British Sign Language

BSL users can contact us via contactSCOTLAND-BSL, the on-line British Sign Language interpreting service.

Find out more on the contactSCOTLAND website

☎   01389 737527

✉   West Dunbartonshire Council, Council Offices, 16 Church Street Dumbarton, G82 1QL

💻   communications@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

West Dunbartonshire Council Equality Statement 2013-2021

The Council is committed to fulfilling the three key elements of the general equality duty as defined in the Equality Act 2010:-

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The protected characteristics are –

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment,
- pregnancy and maternity
- race, this includes ethnicity, colour and national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage/civil partnership (for which only the first duty applies)

Everyone has 'protected characteristics', but it is the treatment individuals and groups receive, the level of autonomy they have, and the positive or negative outcomes for them, that are our focus. Therefore we will:

- remove or minimise disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics
- meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

As well as being legal requirements, these steps contribute to fairer, more efficient and more effective services. Therefore the Council will:-

- take effective action on equality
- make the right decisions, first time around
- develop better policies and practices, based on evidence
- be transparent, accessible and accountable
- deliver improved outcomes for all

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Who and what is this guidance for?

This guidance is provided for Council employees. Its purpose is to set standards for Council communications, to advise employees of these standards, and to provide relevant supporting information.

Many people face barriers to communication because of language or a disability. This publication provides information about communicating effectively who those who do not have English as a first language and with people who have a hearing or visual impairment, or who have learning disabilities or specific learning difficulties.

It is important to note at the start of this guidance (and when communicating with anybody) that communication is a two way process.

It is not intended as a complete, in-depth, guide to every situation, but sets out the standards we should try to achieve.

1.2 Why do we need to improve communication?

Everyone has the right to information and support to access Council services. Many people face barriers to their understanding of information due to factors such as cultural and language differences, sensory impairment and barriers to their understanding of information. A variety of approaches need to be used to overcome these obstacles.

We have a legal duty to provide information in community languages and alternative formats, but its approach to communication goes beyond its statutory duty. 'Communicating Effectively' reflects our priority of providing high quality, best value services. It is part of our approach to mainstreaming equality. Finally, it contributes to meeting our service standards.

Ensuring good communications also helps people realise their Human Rights and helps meet our obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998. More information on Human Rights is available on the Human Rights page of our intranet site.

Remember that the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people is an anticipatory one, it applies even before a public authority or service provider knows that an individual customer or service user is disabled.

1.3 What should appear on all publications?

All publications should state clearly that they can be made available in alternative formats and other languages, and who should be contacted about this. If possible this statement should be included on the front cover. The statement should also appear in the six main languages of Arabic, Chinese, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi and Polish, and note that BSL users can phone us using the Contact Scotland Website.

An electronic version of "For a copy of this document in (language), please contact [telephone number]" translated into these languages can be requested via Communications@west-dunbarton.gov.uk.

An example of the text that should appear in English is:

> This document can be made available electronically, in large print, Braille, tape, and in a variety of community languages. Please contact [Service, telephone number, e-mail address] (give contact responsible for document)

The following chapters explain how to go about getting alternative formats and translations produced.

It is up to individual services to arrange and budget for ethnic minority language interpreters or sign language interpreters to be present when needed or to arrange for translation of service specific information and/or documents.

1.4 Cross cutting considerations

It is vital that you know what you want to get across and/or what you want to find out. Planning is therefore important.

You may not be able to communicate effectively using just one method, or just one meeting, or just one interaction. You may need to be flexible, for example offer pre-meetings to different groups of people to support their inclusion in processes. This should include learning from past communications, especially those that did not work out well, de-briefing can be helpful.

If this guide does not cover your requirements, ask for help! The council is large organisation with lots of collective experience, as are our partners. Please contact with any questions, or learning point via equalities@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

2. Using plain language

We now recognise the benefits of "Plain English" in communicating. We reach a wider audience in a 'friendlier' way.

By following some simple rules, we can improve our communication with everyone.

2.1   Planning your task

- Decide who your audience is.

- Decide what points you want to get across and put them in order.

- If you are consulting or involving people ensure you are ready to receive information as well as impart it, make it clear how people can get in touch with you or provide feedback.

- Decide on the best formats – standard letter, email, tweet, Facebook post, leaflet, radio advert or whatever combination is suitable.

2.2   Writing it down

- Keep your sentences short. On average aim for 15–20 words.

- Keep paragraphs short.

- Use bullet points or numbers to list points.

- Use active verbs. Say "We are dealing with your enquiry." rather than "your enquiry is being dealt with."

- Talk to your reader, use 'you' and 'we'.

- Use everyday words. Avoid jargon. Explain technical terms as required.

- Abbreviations – write in full the first time with the abbreviation in brackets.

- Use appropriate language. For example, say 'staffing' not 'manpower'.

- Cut out words which do not add meaning, for example if you use adjectives use only one!

- Keep to the point, do not stray onto other subjects

- Always check that what you have written is: for letters – clear, helpful, polite and to the point, and for reports – clear, accurate, concise and readable.

- Re-read your final draft with your reader in mind.

- For key documents in frequent use or for wide circulation, show the final draft to the relevant people and invite comments.

- Remember to put the date on documents along with a contact name, telephone number and email where appropriate.

- PDF versions of documents can and should be accessibility checked this can be done using Adobe Acrobat Pro.

2.3   Asking for information on paper

In addition to some of the similar considerations when using electronic surveys, covered in section 3.4 for paper surveys ensure:

That there is secure way of returning surveys or questionnaires; for example you might want to set up a sealed box at busy public events so that people no other participants cannot see their responses or information

Make sure there is an offer for help filling out forms

2.4   Giving feedback

Especially after consultation or engagement events, or in situations where import issues have been discussed, it is a good idea to give a summary of discussions or points, in format that is accessible to consultees/service users.

2.5   Plain English

For help with producing publications, contact Corporate Communications,

Tel: 01389 737578 or communications@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Plain English Campaign

E-mail: info@plainenglish.co.uk for general information

3.   Communicating electronically

3.1   Email

Email has strengths and weaknesses. Particular attention should be paid to the use of email in communication with people with visual impairment and/or from ethnic minority groups, some of whom may not have a good command of English.

The following should be taken into account:

- Consider whether email is the best medium for the message, in terms of the content and the needs of the recipient
- Ensure your message is clear, and not open to misinterpretation.
- Ensure that messages cannot be perceived as aggressive, abusive, sexually offensive, racially biased or discriminatory
- Send a separate message for each new subject, with a clear subject line.
- Include your **name**, **job title**, **section** and **service** in all original messages.
- Use **Arial 12** font, black on a white background, with no special text effects.
- Only use capitals at the start of sentences. Do not use capitals throughout.

You can refer to advice on written materials in other sections of this guide.

> **Case Study**
>
> A voluntary organisation, with an older client group decided to stop producing their newsletter on paper, after checking all users had email. They felt this would save money without negative impacts.
>
> The newsletter was how people got to know about popular outings they organised; after moving to an online newsletter they attracted no bookings for the next event. The organisation contacted clients by phone and discovered that most did not check emails or were not confident about using them.
>
> The organisation reverted to printed newsletter, but will also continue emailing people, to see if the response to email communications improves over time.

3.2   Social Media

We use Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. These are quick ways to post information and images, the first two can be used by the public to ask questions. You can use these by contacting

There are some limitations as Twitter and Facebook post will usually be in English only and due to the quick turnaround of posts professionally translated material will not usually be available. Online instant translation software must not be used to generate any posting or response by us, as these are not accurate enough and may cause confusion and/or offence. BSL video on Facebook is a popular communication method for BSL users.

3.3   Websites

We make extensive use of websites to present information about services and local issues that emerge such as road closures, or events. Our website is no exception and allows people to request postings on events or groups' activities.

We offer users the ability to pay bills such as Council tax and rent. It is important that if a person cannot use the website to make payments alternative ways of paying must always be made available if required, for example face to face at a One Stop Shop. This will help ensure accessibility and legal compliance.

Websites must be visually accessible and that the content itself is written for the web, for example the first paragraph of the page should act as a summary rather than just an introduction. Text should be in plain English and any jargon or acronyms should be explained as they appear in the text. Any graphics used should also be clear and not obscure text. If websites contain video clips, these should be subtitled if possible.

Our website content must be access via screen readers.

3.4   Electronic Surveys

We and other organisations make regularly use of online surveys. Bear in mind that which questions are selected and the way they are asked send a message to how seriously we take issues or agendas, how good our knowledge is in an area, and how serious we are about getting a range of responses. Surveys should:

Be clear about their purpose

Have a high degree of consistency if they are run more than once,

Be in plain English and explain any technical terms

Clearly state their purpose

Only ask for information that will actually be used for the stated purposes

Clearly state their closing date

Contain a statement about confidentially

Contain a statement about how data will be used

As matter of good practice say how the results will shared and when

Be available in an accessible paper or other format as required, or requested; a

note about this should be included in the survey

Information on who to contact to ask for further information

Surveys should be set up in such a way as to allow anonymous responses

Whilst the standard software we use to run surveys is compatible with popular screen reading software used by visually impaired (such as JAWS and NVDA), surveys should be as uncluttered as possible.

If you are inviting people to supply equalities information, such as age, sex or disability, a statement saying why the information is being requested should be used, and an option to 'prefer not to answer' should be available for each question. Guidance on Equalities Monitoring is available on our intranet pages.

When a survey invites people to supply contact details, only the minimum amount of information needed should be requested.

4.   Communicating with people from black & minority ethnic communities

4.1   Background

To comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 and to ensure that all our services are accessible to everyone.

Pakistani, African, Chinese, Indian and Syrian people make up the majority of the Black minority ethnic (BME) communities in West Dunbartonshire. Polish people

make up the largest white ethnic minority group.

The principal languages of ethnic minority people in West Dunbartonshire are*:*

Arabic	Is a common language of Middle Eastern people such as Syrians, and some North African Communities. Arabic is also learned by Muslims to enable them to read the Qur'an, but note that they will not be fluent in Arabic through this alone.

Punjabi

Urdu	Common Languages of the people from South Asian
Hindi	backgrounds for example, Pakistani, Indian)

Cantonese

Hakka   Languages of the Chinese Community

Mandarin

Polish

English

Sometimes people will speak more than one language but not be able to read and/or write in it.

Information for Gypsy Travellers, who usually speak English, needs to match the communication needs of some members of the community. Some Gypsy Travellers do not have high levels of literacy, and may need information provided in audio format, or explained face to face.

Ensuring that all Council documents are written in Plain English is of benefit to everyone, and could make services much easier to access for some people.

4.2   Interpreting Services

Interpreting is the conversion of speech from one language (including British sign language and other sign languages) to another.

Each situation for which you will need to provide an interpreter will vary, and it may be that different levels of support will be appropriate. The boxes below suggest a 'Communication Continuum', varying from using a professional interpreter to a more informal process.

Professional interpreter	—	Trained bilingual professional	—	Informal communication through family and friends, should be restricted to greetings and introductions
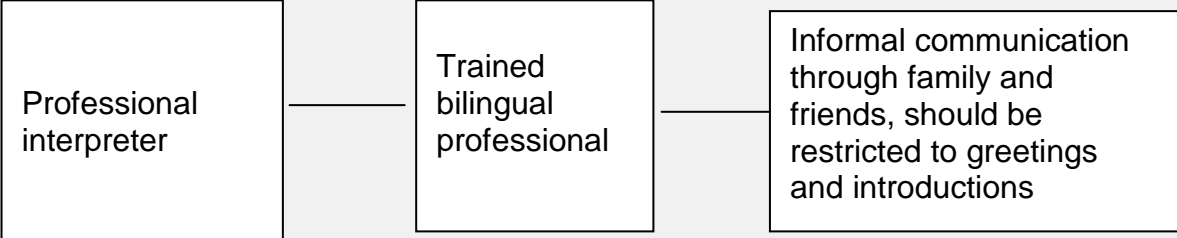
The use of a professional interpreter is vital if there are legal implications, whereas a trained bilingual professional (if available) may be more appropriate in less formal situations.

In order to identify what support to provide, consultation with the service user is important, this may need to be carried out using a professional interpreter, either in person or by using the Language Line telephone service.

4.2.1   Key issues

Where possible, professional interpreters should be employed: this is a way of promoting trust and confidence among communities that they are receiving the highest standard of service.

It is our responsibility to provide an interpreter, not the service users. We require all of our services to display Language Line Identification Posters at all reception points. This helps to identify the language the service user speaks. If you do not have language cards for your reception areas/public offices contact equalities@west-dunbarton.gov.uk. Information on using the service is also available on our intranet Communication, Translation and Interpretation page.

Do not use children as interpreters; communication must be restricted to greetings and introductions, before contacting Language Line or booking an interpreter. The role may cause considerable stress and tension, as well as frustration and embarrassment for the child and parent. They may worry that they are not interpreting correctly and that they may get wrong important information regarding the family's health, wellbeing or something 'official'.

A child could resent the role of interpreter or resent their parent for needing them; this is particularly so if they are missing out on school or socialising with peers. They can find themselves in a position of power and responsibility within the family that could shift the dynamic resulting in the child having authority over the parent

Tensions caused by changing dynamics can also result in adult resentment at a perceived loss of authority to the child.

4.2.2. Disclosures

When using interpreters supplied by a company you should check that their interpreters are Disclosure Scotland checked. The National Register of Public Service Interpreters' Code of Conduct & Guide to Good Practice says that interpreters should disclose any information, including any criminal record, which could make them unsuitable to work on a particular case.

If interpreters are going to be employed directly by us, and will be working with children or vulnerable adults you should check whether they have undergone checks or if they are willing to undergo the appropriate searches by the Scottish Criminal Records Office and the Disclosure Bureau.   Details of this service and applications for Disclosures are available from:

Disclosure Scotland
Po Box 250,
Glasgow,
G51 1YU
Tel: 0870 609 6006
Fax: 0870 609 6996
Email: info@disclosurescotland.co.uk

4.2.3. Engaging an Interpreter

The interpreter is there to allow you to communicate with your service user and to help the service user access services or deal with problems.

Interpreters often don't get much time to prepare so they must have the necessary skills and information to respond immediately and effectively to the service user's needs.

You should make sure that you and the interpreter are properly prepared for meetings. Pre-meetings should be held with the interpreter to give them a thorough briefing about the background and reasons for the interview or assignment, and technical terms.

You should make sure that the interpreter speaks the same language and dialect as the service user.

You should consider sex and gender issues. A lone female may not be comfortable with being represented by a male interpreter for cultural or religious reasons, or in cases of abuse.

When meeting with service users with an interpreter you should try to use short sentences and allow the interpreter to interpret before continuing. Look at the person you are communicating with and talk to him/her directly, rather than the interpreter. Do not use slang terms.

Where specialist terminology is essential give the interpreter time to explain the meaning. Interpreters working in the public sector should have:

- a good command of English and the target language

- a familiarity with and an objective understanding of the culture(s) in question

- an ability to function professionally in all situations

- have been sourced through a reputable company or agency

- and/or a commitment to the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters' Code of Conduct and Practice

- a sound knowledge of the structure, procedures and commonly used terminology of the professional areas in which they work

- complete impartiality of attitude, speech and script.

4.2.4. On Initial Contact

On initial contact the interpreter should confirm that they speak the same language and dialect as the service user.

4.2.5 Impartiality

- the interpreter will not negotiate or advocate on behalf of either party

- the interpreter will not act as advisor or counsellor for any party

- The interpreter will not attempt to influence the outcome of any exchange between parties.

4.2.5. Confidentiality

The interpreter will maintain complete confidentiality, with no third parties being imparted any information about the interpreting session, those involved or its content.

Do not assume that service users will be used to using professional interpreters; It must be made clear to service users that interpreters are required to interpret exactly what they and Council Officers say at all times, there are no exceptions.

4.2.7 Fairness, Equalities and Human Rights

An interpreter should not discriminate between parties, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of ethnicity, colour, ethnic origin, caste, age, nationality, religion, belief, sex or gender, marriage of civil partnership, sexual orientation, disability or gender reassignment.

4.2.8 Cultural Guidance

You must not rely on the interpreter for advice on cultural norms and differences: you must bear in mind that these are the interpreter's views and that no individual can speak for a whole culture or ethnicity or variation within it.

4.2.9 Sensitivity

The interpreter should be sensitive and understanding in coping with tense and stressful situations, such as racial abuse, child abuse and domestic violence. You should also be sensitive to the fact that the interpreter may find being exposed to such situations stressful.

4.2.10 Video Interpreting

It is increasingly common for video over internet services to be offered which are valuable for communication with British Sign Language users, in some medical/clinical situations; for many situations however they should not be used as a replacement for face to face interpreters for example counselling.

There are practical considerations when using video over internet interpreting;

- Make sure that staff are adequately trained in how to use the technology
- Check functionality or technology before it is used and things like battery level
- Avoid using mobile phones, laptops are preferable, which must have a working microphone and camera
- Make sure that internet connections are good enough to make calls reliable
- You need good even light
- Have as plain a background as possible
- You need a quiet area free from lots of echoes, sudden noises etc. This will benefit everyone, but is also important in terms of creating an inclusive environment for other, such as Neurodiverse people.

4.3   Translation Services

Translation: The conversion of **written** text from one language to another.

It is important to remember that translation is more than a simple operation of swapping a word in one language into a word in another. The finished product needs to have meaning for the reader.

Translations take time to produce and this should be built into the production process and considered when carrying out consultations.

All Council publications must to carry a translation panel which says how service users can get a copy of the document in a community language or alternative format.

The starting point for any translation should be plain English text of the document to be translated. It should be grammatically correct, clear and concise.

You should consider if the whole document needs to be translated or if a summary would be more appropriate.

You should also consider if a translation is the best option for the service user. Translations should always be seen as a supplement to, and not a replacement for, getting an interpreter. Similarly, you should consider if a written translation is the best way to meet your service user's needs. Would an audio tape be more appropriate, would meeting with a community group be a better approach?

There are a number of things that can challenge the skills and expertise of the translator. These include:

- ambiguities, abbreviations, jargon or colloquialism, puns, word play and sayings or proverbs where there is no direct equivalent of an English term in the target language, for example, there is no direct equivalent of "Council/Local Authority"

- where questions about the translation will be followed up by someone who can't understand the target language.

4.3.1 Does it really need to be translated?

Rather than translate all documents in full, assess what information is actually needed. Translate only relevant sections of existing documents, or produce shorter documents in your own language and have these translated.

4.3.2 Is the use of pictures appropriate?

Use of maps, pictograms and diagrams can be more effective than text. Only use text when you have to, or when it is the most effective means of getting your message across. Text and graphics can be mixed but ensure that layouts are clear and still legible with adequate contrast.

Be aware however that people living with dementia can have very literal interpretation of pictures and diagrams. This can also be the case for people living with autism spectrum conditions.

4.3.3 Are there too many cultural references?

For example references to a particular country's national sport may not be understood, and references to the human body can be viewed differently by different cultures.

4.3.4 How important is style?

Many translators/translation companies often supply 'for information' translation as standard work, rather than a 'rewrite' or 'adaptation'. To avoid misunderstanding, clarify this up front. Get it in writing.

4.3.5 Finish your text before starting

A number of different versions can lead to errors creeping into your translation.

4.3.6 Tell the translator what it's for

Tell your translator what your text is for, so that they can prepare a foreign-language version with maximum impact for that audience. Ideally translators strip down your sentences entirely before creating new ones in the target language. Good translators sometimes ask questions along the way.

Case Study

With the intention of being as inclusive as possible, an organisation has a consultation document translated into several languages. The questionnaire has a lot of free text boxes, and open ended questions.

A considerable number of responses are received in English and other languages, but because there is so much free text, translation and collation takes much time and is more expensive than it needed to be.

Learning was around the other methods of consultation, e.g. interpreted focus groups perhaps providing a better approach in some circumstances.

4.4   Meetings and events

4.4.1 Check access requirements

When calling meetings ensure that the invitation asks if there are any access requirements we need to be aware of to support people's attendance and participation. Make sure you do this in plenty of time.

4.4.2 Venues

Whilst accessibility is not just about the physical features of a building, these are still important considerations:

- Is signage to the venue and within the venue clear?
- Are entrances and exits accessible to wheelchair, scooter or walking aids users?
- Are toilets and changing areas accessible? Is a 'Changing Places' toilet required
- Does the venue have the correct audio/visual (AV) equipment?
- Have you satisfied yourself that A/V equipment is working well?
- Does the venue have an adequate working induction loop?
- Is the venue acoustically suitable?
- Are slight lines adequate?
- Is the lighting adequate?
- Does the building have Wi-Fi; is this accessible and good quality?

Other considerations are:
- Are venue staff adequately trained?
- Are there enough staff?
- If you are using PowerPoint, have you ensured that these are as accessible as possible
- Are evaluation procedures adequate for all attendees

4.4.3 Transport

Women, disabled people, Black minority ethnic people and people on lower incomes are more reliant on public transport.

Consider the following when planning meetings:

- How dependent are attendees on public transport?

- Is parking, including, accessible parking adequate?

- Have you taken into consideration any scheduled transport disruption such as road or rail works?

- Is transport accessible, available and affordable

- Is rurality, or lack of public transport a consideration

It may be a reasonable adjustment to offer support with transport or transport costs to some people, or people from some geographical areas

4.4.4 Timing of meetings and events

When organising events, meetings, etc., where people from a variety of communities, cultures and religions are invited, the following procedures should be adopted:

- Dates of meetings should be checked to ensure that they do not cut across a religious or cultural festival. Re.online provides a calendar of religious festivals which can be checked to avoid or minimise clashes with Council consultations or events.

- Meetings held on days which exclude members of a particular community should be avoided, e.g. Friday over lunch period would exclude the Muslim community and Saturday meetings will exclude the orthodox Jewish community. Timing of Sunday meetings should be considered to avoid exclusion of, for example, Christian, Hindu and Sikh worshippers.

- Avoid meeting times at the beginning and end of the school day where this is likely to be an issue for the attendees expect or have invited

4.4.5 Offering Food and Drink

Dietary requirements must be given special consideration, including allergies:

- When arranging meetings where you are offering food or drink – check beforehand for any special requirements, including a space on any invitation response to outline any requirements.

- One key issue can be the provision of Halal, vegetarian or vegan food depending on the religion of the participants. Often the most inclusive option is to supply some vegan food at meetings; this can be labelled Halal/Vegan/Vegetarian.

- The Muslim community will not eat any pork product and will only eat meat which has been ritually slaughtered (Halal). This is readily available from Halal butchers.

- The Jewish community also eats only meat which has been killed by their own

religious, trained butchers (Kosher) and will not eat any product of the pig. They will not eat meat and milk together, so, therefore, meat with cheese or any other milk produce is unacceptable. Either can be eaten on its own.

- The Sikh community does not eat beef. While most will accept other meats, some women will not eat meat of any kind. Halal meat is not normally eaten. Their way of slaughter is called Jhatka.

- The Hindu community are mostly vegetarian with some being vegan, although some do eat non-Halal meat except cow.

- The diet of the Chinese community has no religious restrictions, but is custom based; be aware of course that anyone from any community may be a member of any religious or belief group.

Food must be plated separately, and clearly labelled. Individual serving spoons should also be made available. This is not just for cultural, religious or belief reasons but also for safety in terms of food allergies and intolerances.

It is also important to note that cakes, biscuits, etc. have no animal fat content.

Providing long bendable drinking straws at events and meetings helps meet the needs of some disabled people; bendable paper straws are now easy to obtain.

4.4.6 Providing childcare

Crèche facilities must account of the black and ethnic minority communities.

Provision should also meet the needs of disabled children.

For health and safety reasons information from bilingual speakers/language users, with appropriate language skills, should be available for emergencies.

Further Advice

Information on other religious/cultural requirements may be available through the appropriate religious community organisation.
You can get further details by emailing equalities@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
4.5   Supporting Publications/Information

Good Practice Guidelines,
Scottish Translation, Interpreting and Communication Forum
Available on the Intranet or on the Scottish Executive website at
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/02/18873/32914

Scottish Accessible Information Forum
http://www.saifscotland.org.uk/

Scottish Interfaith Council
http://www.interfaithscotland.org/

Translation, Getting it Right: a guide to buying translations,

Institute of Translation and Interpreting
Available on the Intranet or on the Institute of Translation and Interpreting website at http://www.itiscotland.org.uk/

4.6   Translation and Interpretation Services

There are a range of contractors that provide one of both of these services.

Service requests should provide contractors with the following information:

- language (dialect if known)
- date of interpreting assignment
- time of assignment
- How long the interpreter is required for
- name of the requesting agency
- address of the requesting agency
- location
- If there are particular experience requirements e.g. legal, medical.

VoiceOver Interpreting (Face to face interpreting)
Glasgow G51 3UU
E-mail: admin@voiceoverglasgow.org.uk
Tel: 0141 445 3718

Language Line (Telephone interpreting)
Freephone: 0800 1692 879
Fax: 020 7520 1450
Email: enquiries@languageline.co.uk
We have a contract with Language Line to provide telephone interpreting services. This is particularly useful when service users who do not speak English come in to use services. They have a 24hr telephone interpreting service and can put you in contact with a qualified interpreter in seconds.

This service can be accessed using any type of telephone, though one with a speaker phone mode is best.

This service is especially suitable for:

- Making and receiving phone calls where language support is required
- 'First contact' scenarios where the non or limited English speaker is with you
- Short language-assisted conversations (lasting up to 20 minutes)
- Routine enquiries, bookings or cancellations
- Urgent, emergency or unexpected language-impeded scenarios

Information on how to use Language Line and language identification cards are available for West Dunbartonshire Council employees on our intranet, in the Communication, Translation and Interpretation section

To access this service you must have the West Dunbartonshire Council's ID number. The contacts in each service for this are:

Transformation
Ricardo Rea, ext. 7198

Regeneration
Stefan Kristmanns, ext. 7545

Education, Learning and Attainment
Lorna Baird, ext. 2149

West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership
Mary O'Neill, ext. 7750

Global Connect (Interpreting, BSL Interpreting, Translations)
Glasgow G2 2UE
Tel: 00 (44) 141 332 8889
Email: info@globalconnects.com

Alphatrad Translating and Interpreting Services

Cordia Linguistics (Interpreting and Translation)
Glasgow G4 9XE
Tel: 0141 276 6850
E-mail: guida.torretti@cordia.co.uk

4.7   Useful Contacts

West Dunbartonshire Equality Forum
West Dunbartonshire Council,
Tel: 01389 737198
E-mail: equalities@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Isaro Social Integration Network
Community Centre 81
2/16 Braes Avenue
Whitecrook, Clydebank
G81 1ND

West of Scotland Regional Equality Council
Glasgow G20 6EZ
Tel: 0141 337 6626

Equality and Human Rights Commission
Telephone: 0141 228 5910
E-mail: scotland@equalityhumanrights.com

BSL users can contact us via contactSCOTLAND-BSL, the on-line British Sign Language interpreting service. Find out more on the contactSCOTLAND website.

Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS)

The EASS is for service users and cannot be used by organisations. It provides expert information, advice and support on discrimination human rights and the law,

were more help and advice than other local organisations can provide is needed.

Phone: 0808 800 0082
Textphone: 0808 800 0084
Website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

5.   Communicating with people who have a hearing impairment

5.1   Background

An estimated 14,000 people in West Dunbartonshire have a hearing loss of some degree. Of these, an estimated 5,000 people find that this causes significant problems in day-to-day activity such as using the telephone, hearing a doorbell, hearing announcements, and taking part in conversations in busy settings. Hearing loss is an 'invisible' disability which often leads to isolation and the intense frustration of not being able to communicate effectively with other people.

5.2   What we call hearing loss

There are four commonly used terms which we use to describe hearing loss. 'Hearing impaired' refers to any form of hearing loss and is the recommended general term. Three specific terms are 'Deaf', 'deafened' and 'hard of hearing'.

'Deaf' can refer to someone with a severe hearing loss, or someone who is profoundly deaf, with no useful hearing. Deaf with a capital 'D' refers to sign language users.

There is an identifiable Deaf community who use British Sign Language (BSL), which is an official language of Scotland, which is commonly their first language, and the one they understand best, they are often without speech. Therefore some Deaf people have a limited understanding of written English, which can present a further barrier to communication.

'Deafened' usually refers to someone who has experienced profound loss of hearing as an adult, usually through illness or injury.

'Hard of hearing' means anything from a mild to severe hearing loss.

The general term 'sensory impairment' refers to hearing and/or sight loss.

5.3   Good practice in communicating

- Do not assume that everyone can hear.

- Ask people about communication; for example, you could ask 'do you have any access or communication needs we need to be aware of to support your participation' you should do this in advance if possible. Deaf people may also have other impairments.

The following points are aimed at assisting hearing impaired people to hear what you are saying and to use their capacity for lip-reading:

- Find a place away from noise and other distractions

- Stand or sit where your face can be seen in good light

- Avoid having your back to the window or being in front of another source of strong light that may put your face in shadow

- Be at an appropriate distance from the person you are speaking to.

- Look at the person you are communicating with

- Make sure you have their attention before you start speaking

- When you are talking, do not smoke, eat or cover your mouth or face.

- Do not talk while you are writing

- Slow down if you talk quickly

- Speak normally, do not over-emphasise words.

- Speak clearly but do not shout

- Repeat yourself if necessary, but do not keep repeating, find an alternative way of expressing the point

- Write things down if it helps

- Do not waffle or go off at tangents

5.4   Sign language interpreters

It is the Council's responsibility to book and pay for interpreters. In some situations, the individual service user may choose to bring a parent or friend to support them. This is their choice, however it is best to book a registered interpreter as they sign up to codes of practice and remain objective.

For Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL), sign language interpreters (SLIs) will aid communication. SLIs are trained to interpret between BSL and English. They are neutral, independent and will maintain confidentiality.

Be aware that not everyone may use BSL; there are other languages such as Irish Sign Language.

5.4.1 Booking Sign Language Interpreters

It should be noted that sign language interpreters are scarce and as much notice as possible should be given. The Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) lists freelance BSL interpreters and details their qualifications and experience. By booking a freelance interpreter, you may avoid agency booking fees. Their website is http://www.sasli.org.uk/

You can also contact providers such as 'Global Connect' or 'Deaf Connections'.

5.4.2 Disclosures

The National Register of Public Service Interpreters' Code of Conduct & Guide to Good Practice says that interpreters should disclose any information, including any criminal record, which could make them unsuitable to work on a particular case.

If interpreters are going to be working with children or vulnerable adults you should confirm whether they have undergone a disclosure check.

5.4.3   Guidelines for using Sign Language Interpreters

DO:

- Make time to discuss the interpreter's role before the start of the meeting.

- Speak directly to the Deaf person, not to the interpreter.

- Negotiate seating arrangements before you start to make sure the Deaf person and the interpreter can see one another.

- Keep background noise to a minimum so the interpreter can hear the discussion.

- In meetings, ensure that there is only one speaker at a time and that they are clearly identified

- Provide the interpreter with background information and, if possible, copies of written material well before the meeting to give time for preparation.

- Remember the Interpreter will interpret everything that is said or signed (even audible asides).

- Book more than one Interpreter if the meeting is in a formal setting and lasts more than an hour.

DO NOT:

- Expect an Interpreter to work continuously for more than 30 – 45 minutes. Allow for regular breaks.

- Ask the Interpreter to make any independent input to the meeting. The Interpreter remains neutral.

- Ask the Interpreter for personal details while he/she is interpreting.

5.4.3 Potential Help with costs for interpreting with Trainees or Employees

National training providers delivering Employability Fund programmes can apply to the SDS ASN Access Fund to cover the cost of interpreting for the duration of the person's time on the programme. Providers are expected to receive quotes in

advance of application. Full details on the application process can be found at www.sds.co.uk/asn

Deaf people in employment, including Modern Apprenticeships, can apply for Access to Work funding. Access to Work can be used to provide specialist equipment and/or language support in the workplace. Information on Access to Work and how to apply can be found at https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work

5.5   Textphones

Textphones enable severely hearing impaired people to communicate using a telephone with a small keyboard and screen. The user types his/her message which then appears on the screen at the other end of the line. They are mainly used by sign language users.

Textphone numbers should be listed separately in the Phone Book.

Textphones work best when they have a dedicated telephone line (that is not shared with a voice line) and when staff have been trained to use them. Training in the use of textphones is available from the RNID, Deaf Connections and the British Deaf Association (see useful contacts, below).

5.6   Contact Scotland for British Sign Language (BLS) Users

BSL users can contact us via contactSCOTLAND-BSL, the on-line free British Sign Language interpreting service. We can also contact BSL users using this service. If your receive a call from this service the only difference you will notice is that it will have to be conducted slightly more slowly.

5.7   Direct communications to the council through BSL video clips

Some Deaf/BSL users may prefer not to use contact Scotland and might attempt to the Council using BSL video clips, linked via email or in some other way. It is possible that such emails will be caught by the Councils email spam filter. Responding to such a query will also take longer as clips would need to be translated.

5.8   NGT Relay (Formerly 'Typetalk')

This service enables telephone conversations between deaf people using textphones and hearing people using standard phones. Calls are made via a relay operator who transcribes between voice and text. Calls are charged at the ordinary rate. See details below:

5.9   Loop, Infrared and Soundfield Systems

An induction loop consists of a loop of wire, a control box, and one or more microphones. The microphone picks up sound and the box converts this into magnetic waves which are sent out by the loop. These waves are picked up by a hearing aid on the 'T' setting, without interference from background noise.

A sign should be displayed wherever a loop system is available. Hearing loops at front counters should be kept on during opening hours if a hearing aid user has to ask for a system to be turned on this will create an avoidable barrier to access, and add to staff workload.

It should be noted that hearing aids can pick up sound from induction loops from a considerable distance therefore two loops cannot be used simultaneously in close proximity, and it may be difficult to maintain confidentiality.

An alternative to the loop systems is an infrared system, which works on the same principle as a loop system but does not require the wire. Not all buildings are suitable for the infrared system, but they are less likely to create problems of confidentiality.

Signage is important to indicate the availability of loop and infrared systems. Signs should be displayed proximately.

Employees should be aware of how loops and infrared systems at their workplace operate. Training can be accessed via the Sensory Impairment Team (see below). A soundfield amplification system provides an even spread of sound around a room. This is beneficial for deaf people, as they can hear a speaker's voice clearly from wherever they are seated. All people can benefit from the soundfield system's amplification and even distribution of sound; however such systems are still rare, and are generally confined to some schools and educational establishments.

5.10   Useful contacts

Sensory Impairment Team, West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care partnership

The Sensory Impairment Team provides advice, support and information to the carers of sensory impaired people and carries out assessments of carers' needs. Assistance can include the provision of equipment to overcome practical problems.

Third Floor
Council Offices
Garshake Road
Dumbarton
G82 3PU

NGT Relay
If on telephone calls you can't hear the other person's voice or don't catch all that they're saying, or they can't understand what you're saying, the Next Generation Text (NGT) Service can help.
Tel: 0800 7311888
Textphone: 0800 500888

Sign Language Interpreter Service
Cordia (Services) LLP

Glasgow, G4 9XE
Tel: 0141 353 9000
Email: contactus@cordia.co.uk

Global Language Services
Glasgow
Tel: 0141 429 3429

West Dunbartonshire Access for All ('The Access Panel')
Margaret Maceira, Secretary
9 Islay Crescent
Old Kilpatrick
G60 5EW
Tel: 01389 382067
Email: Accesspanel.wd@live.co.uk

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID)
Glasgow G40 3AP
Tel: 0141 554 0053
Textphone: 0141 530 5750

Deaf Connections (formerly the Glasgow & West of Scotland Society for the Deaf)
Glasgow G5 9EJ
Tel: 0141 420 1759
Textphone: 0141 429 6682
Email: enquiries@deafconnections.co.uk

Deafblind UK
Lenzie G66 5BG
Tel/textphone: 0141 777 6111
Email: info@deafblindscotland.org.uk

Scottish Council on Deafness
Glasgow G2 6LD
Tel (v): 0141 248 2474 & 1854
Text: 0141 248 2477
SMS: 07925 417 338

Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF)
Glasgow G1 3DN
Tel: 0141 226 5261
Textphone: 0141 226 8459
Email: info@saifscotland.org.uk

6   Communicating with people who have a visual impairment

6.1   Background

Around 600 people in West Dunbartonshire are registered Blind or Partially Sighted. A further 1200 are estimated to be eligible for registration. An additional 3000 people will have sight problems that make it difficult or impossible to read ordinary newspaper print.

Around 90% of people with visual impairment are over 60 years old, and the problems of sight loss are frequently compounded by other forms of disability.

There are many different forms of visual impairment, such as

- loss of central vision

- tunnel vision

- seeing everything as a blur

- having bits of the field of vision missing

- being able only to distinguish dark from light

Only a very small proportion of people with visual impairment see nothing at all.

It is not always easy to identify people with visual impairment. Very few have a guide dog, and not all carry a white stick or wear dark glasses.

Methods of accessing written information vary widely. Very few visually impaired people use Braille. An increasing number of people access information using modified computers. Many people prefer audiotape and they will increasingly use CDs. Large print is suitable for people with less severe sight loss.

6.2   What we call visual impairment

The terms blind and partially sighted can be used to describe different degrees of visual impairment but can have a variety of meanings. It is therefore preferable to use the general term 'visual impairment'.

The general term 'sensory impairment' refers to hearing and/or sight loss.

6.3   Good practice in communicating

- Do not assume that everyone can see.

- If you think someone may have sight problems, ask if they need any help. This will vary between individuals and will depend on setting and circumstance.

- If there are people speaking or chairing the meeting, avoid placing them in front of very bright light sources as they will be in silhouette.

- Talk naturally.

- When you approach a blind or partially sighted person, say who you are and address him/her by name if you know it. If not, a light touch on the arm will indicate who you are speaking to, but be aware of 'personal space' which can vary between cultures and expectations between sexes.

- Before you move away, say that you are about to leave.

- Do not leave things lying around which a blind person could trip over.

- Do not leave a blind person standing alone without some point of reference (e.g. a chair or a wall).

- To help a blind person into a chair, put his or her hand on the seat or back of the chair. He or she will be able to do the rest.

- If you are providing information, remember to check what format the person needs it in.

- Remember to record how many requests you get for information and in what format (for future planning).

6.4   Information in print

Many visually impaired people can access information in print if it is of sufficient size and boldness, and layout and contrast are good. The RNIB produces guidelines, and most good practice for all written information.

Paper – use matt, not glossy, paper. Use paper that is thick enough to prevent type showing through on the other side. Photocopy from originals, using light paper

Font – We (the Council) regard Arial as the standard font for all papers and publications.

Type size – Minimum 12 point print size should be used.

Contrast – make sure there is good contrast between the type and background paper. Black type on white or yellow paper gives good contrast. If you use a colour other than black for print, make sure it is a dark colour and print it on light coloured paper. Do not use red and green together.

Background – always print on a plain background. Do not print over pictures or graphics.

Reversals – white type on black or another dark colour is acceptable provided that the typeface, size and weight are suitable. Where possible, increase the type size to 14 point minimum.

Capitals – avoid using capitals for large blocks of text. Most people find it easier to read upper and lower case.

Content – a clear contents list and headings assist visually impaired readers to locate information.

Line length – should be in the range of 50 – 65 characters or less.

Spacing – maintain even word spacing. Do not condense or stretch lines of type. Unjustified right hand margins help partially sighted readers follow the text. Avoid splitting words at the end of lines.

Paragraphs – should be short and have clear spacing between them.

Design and layout – where possible, avoid use of double columns or tabular presentation of information, as these are difficult to present in alternative formats.

Dates – do not use "date as postmark" on letters. The date should always be clearly shown.

6.5   Alternative Formats

Ensure that where a document states that it is available in alternative formats, that these can actually be provided. Try as far as possible to provide these at the same time as the print copy.

There is a wide range of alternative formats for written information and visually impaired people are often able to use more than one format. Where possible, discuss their requirements directly, as this is likely to achieve an effective and efficient response to their needs.

6.5.1   Large print

Type size – use 16 point bold. Consult your readership where possible as requirements vary. Larger than 20 point is not recommended.

Layout – check that the change to large print has not made the layout unclear.

6.5.2   Braille

Braille is a tactile form of writing using permutations of six raised dots, like the six in dominoes. It is much bulkier and heavier than ordinary text, though there are many contractions used.

Numbering of sections, headings, paragraphs and lists are important because Braille is more difficult to scan than print.

Braille pages are numbered in the top right hand corner.

Always include a contents page at the beginning of the document to help the reader get a quick idea of the document's structure and contents.

The cost of producing information in Braille can be reduced by transcribing only those parts of a document that is specifically required in Braille. This should be discussed with the person concerned.

A Braille transcription service is available through the Royal National Institute for the Blind. See Useful Addresses below.

Commercial transcription services are also available.

6.5.3   Audiotape

This can be a useful way of providing information to people. It has its limitations – it is not easy to locate information on a tape when you want to refer to it.

Side 'A' of the tape should be clearly identified with clear print, and with tactile marking.

When recording, use an external microphone if available. Place it on a flat surface and face the centre of the room to avoid sound bouncing off the wall.

Start by stating clearly what the document is and, if you know, how long it is in time.

Read clearly, not too slowly, and vary the tone of your voice to give some interest and meaning to the words.

Pause briefly at the end of the paragraphs and sections to indicate where they end.

Tape over mistakes as you go along.

Spell important or unusual words.

Remember to label your tapes, if possible using large print and/or Braille.

Give a name and contact number for further information where appropriate.

See Useful Addresses for the local Talking Newspapers, Bankie Talk which may be able to help in the production of audio taped material.

6.5.4 CDs

When providing discs, keep in mind the following:

- ask people to specify the computer format in which they require information;

- start the information with a 'read me' message explaining the contents; and,

- where possible, give a name and phone number which people can access with any queries.

6.5.6   Sound Files

There are programs that are available that can turn text documents into sound files, that can be opened by computers, mobile phones or other devices, these files can be emailed placed on websites or transferred to flash drives and CDs.

6.6   Useful Contacts

Access Panel
Margaret Maceira, Secretary
9 Islay Crescent
Old Kilpatrick
G60 5EW
Tel: 01389 382067
Accesspanel.wd@live.co.uk

Council information
Minutes/agendas/reports available in different formats contact Legal & Admin on 01389 737468 and from the Council's website.

West Dunbartonshire Council Job Application Forms
For different formats, contact People and Transformation on 01389 737373 or HRconnect@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) Scotland
Dunedin House
25 Ravelston Terrace
Edinburgh
EH4 3TP
Tel: 0131 311 8500
Fax: 0131 311 8529
Email: rnibscotland@rnib.org.uk

RNIB Audio Transcription Services
Centre for Sensory Impaired People
17 Gullane Street
Glasgow
G11 6AH
Tel: 0141 337 2955
Email: glasgowtrans@rnib.org.uk

RNIB Braille Resources Centre for Schools
http://www.rnib.org.uk/braille-and-moon-%E2%80%93-tactile-codes-learning-braille/braille-resources-schools

RNIB Service user Services
PO Box 173,
Peterborough
PE2 6WS

Tel: 0845 702 3152   (calls charged at local rate)
Fax: 01733 3751555
Email: cservices@rnib.org.uk
Web: http://shop.rnib.org.uk/contacts#maincontent

Bankie Talk
5 Hall Street
Clydebank
G81 1XQ
Tel: 01389 381455
http://bankietalk.com/

Playback (tape transcription service)
Centre for Sensory Impaired People
17 Gullane Street
Glasgow
G11 6AH
Tel: 0141 334 2983
Fax: 0141 334 2983
www.play-back.com
Visability
(Formerly the Glasgow & West of Scotland Society for the Blind)
2 Queen's Crescent
Glasgow
G4 9BW
Tel: 0141 332 4632
info@visability.org.uk
https://www.visibility.org.uk/

7.   Communicating with people who have both a hearing and a visual impairment

7.1   Background

Approximately 40 people in West Dunbartonshire have a severe combined loss of hearing and sight, sometimes called dual sensory impairment or deafblindness. This causes significant problems with accessing information, communicating with others and getting around independently.

Dual sensory impairment may have a congenital cause or may be acquired in the course of peoples' lives. Congenital deafblindness may be associated with other disabilities such as learning disability. Acquired deafblindness is more common and affects mainly older people.

7.2   Good Practice in Communicating

Assume those who have a dual sensory impairment will try to use any residual hearing and/or sight they may have, so try to implement the good practice

described in the sections on communication with people who have hearing or visual impairment.

Don't assume all deafblind people can read Braille, or use sign language. Tactile communication should be tried when other options are not appropriate.

Where necessary arrange for a guide/communicator to be made available to a person with dual sensory impairment. This service can be arranged through Deafblind Scotland (see useful contacts, below).

Where a guide/communicator is to be used, implement good practice for sign language interpreters particularly regarding guide/communicator's needs for background info and regular breaks, as noted in the section on hearing impairment.

7.3   Making information accessible for deafblind people

Where people have a dual sensory impairment it will be necessary to consider making the following adjustments:

- **Text size** - Use Arial 14 font, or larger, in bold, using lower case with only necessary capitals, justified to the left and using no underlining.

- **Language** - Take time to ensure clear unambiguous statements are used, avoiding excessive use of acronyms or jargon.

- **Formats** - Alternative formats should include the normal large print, audiotape, Braille. In addition offer a summarised version. Other formats include CD and sound files.

- **Communication Support** - Be aware that alternative formats may not be enough and that it may be necessary to make arrangements to provide 1 to 1 specialist communication support to enable deafblind people to access routine information, use the telephone, internet or helplines etc.

- **Service Access** - Consider the use of 1 to 1 specialist communication support, home visits, telephones, text messaging, textphones, email and the internet to improve access to your service.

- **Location** - Staff should be aware of the importance of good lighting and the problems that can be caused by background noise and visual 'noise'. Use a quiet room.

- **Loop System** - Have a working loop system available for hearing aid users.

7.4   Useful Contacts

Deafblind Scotland
21 Alexandra Avenue, Lenzie G66 5BG
Tel/textphone: 0141 777 6111
Fax: 0141 775 3311

Email: info@deafblindscotland.org.uk
Web: http://www.deafblindscotland.org.uk/

Sense Scotland
43 Middlesex Street, Kinning Park, Glasgow G41 1EE
Tel: 0141 429 0294
Fax: 0141 429 0295
Text: 0141 418 7170
Email: info@sensescotland.org.uk
Web: http://www.sensescotland.org.uk/

deafscotland
c/o The Alliance
349 Bath Street
Glasgow G2 4AA
Tel: 0141 248 2472
Mob: 07925417338

8   Communicating with people who have learning disabilities

8.1   Background

Around 1.5 million people in Britain have some degree of learning disability, which means that they need help to understand information, learn skills, and to cope independently. Down's syndrome is an example of a learning disability. In the past, a large proportion of people with learning disabilities have lived in institutions but the vast majority now live in the community where they require the same public services as the wider population.

The Scottish Government has identified the communication and understanding of information as a key issue for people with learning disability and for the services that support them. The following notes cover some general principles and pointers to assist the effective communication that people with learning disability need and are entitled to.

8.2   Good practice in communicating

- Be clear about what you want to say and why.

- Be sure that the information is relevant

- Speak directly to the person rather than to a support worker, though carers and support workers may be useful sources of additional information.

- Keep sentences short and simple.

- If you are asking questions, ask one at a time

- Wait for responses before moving on

- It is ok to rephrase questions if you think someone has not understood, but do not do this too much

- Support spoken language with natural gestures such as signs, facial expressions and eye contact

- Avoid abstract concepts such as "later" or "somewhere", or analogies. Instead, be as specific as possible.

- Avoid jargon

- Drawings, diagrams, photographs or symbols can support written information. (see **section 4.3.2** for further information)

- Audio or video can be useful alternatives to written information.

- It helps if you get to know the person where possible. Consistency of contact person can be useful.

8.3   Useful contacts

Learning Disability Services,
West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership
Clydebank G81 1UG
Tel: 0141 562 2333 or 0141 562 2334

9.   Communicating with people who have Specific Learning Difficulties/Neuro Diversity

9.1   Background

Specific Learning Difficulties (or SpLDs), affect the way information is learned and processed. They are neurological (rather than psychological), usually run in families and occur independently of intelligence.

A note on Language; Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the different ways the brain can work and interpret information. It highlights that people naturally think about things differently. We have different interests and motivations, and are naturally better at some things and poorer at others.

Most people are neurotypical, meaning that the brain functions and processes information in the way society expects.

However it is estimated that around 1 in 7 people (more than 15% of people in the UK) are neurodivergent, meaning that the brain functions, learns and processes information differently. Neurodivergence includes Attention Deficit Disorders, Autism, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia.

Neurodivergent/SpLD are umbrella terms covering a range of frequently co-occurring things;

- **Dyslexia.**
- **Dyspraxia / DCD.**
- **Dyscalculia.**
- **A.D.D / A.D.H.D.**

They can have significant impact on education and learning and on the acquisition of literacy skills.

Most forms of neurodivergence are experienced along a 'spectrum'. Each form of neurodivergence (such as dyslexia and autism) has a range of associated characteristics and these can vary from individual to individual. For example, the effects of dyspraxia on one person can be different to another person who also has dyspraxia. The effects on the individual can also change over time.

Additionally, an individual will often have the characteristics of more than one type of neurodivergence. It is vital to remember that people are individuals

Dyslexia is the most common form of neurodiversity and is usually hereditary. A dyslexia person may mix up letters within words and words within sentences while reading. They may also have difficulty with spelling words correctly while writing; letter reversals are common.

Dyslexia is not just about literacy, though weaknesses in literacy are often the most visible sign. Dyslexia affects the way information is processed, stored and retrieved, with problems of memory, speed of processing, time perception, organisation and sequencing.

Some people may also have difficulty navigating a route, left and right and compass directions.

9.2 Good Practice

Most of the good practice outlined at **8.2** is useful for communicating with Dyslexic People.

Sending information well in advance of meetings, and making sure that such information is in a clear format can assist with communications.

Supplying information in a variety of ways, visually, in text and verbally is generally good practice and may particularly benefit dyslexic people.

Ensuring that information not presented ahead of time will be available afterwards in accessible formats would also be helpful, as this will let dyslexic people concentrate on listening and participating without having to worry about also taking notes and committing a lot of information to memory.

A good guide to making reasonable adjustments for dyslexic people is on the [British Dyslexia Association website](#).

9.3 Sources of Information

The [British Dyslexia Association](#) website provides a range of information. Though there is a particular focus on school pupils and students, information and advice is useful for all ages and many situations.

10.   Communicating with people who are living with dementia

10.1   Background

Dementia is a common condition. Your risk of developing dementia increases as you get older, and the condition usually occurs in people over the age of 65. Dementia is a syndrome (a group of related symptoms) associated with an ongoing decline of the brain and its abilities. This includes problems with:

- memory loss

- thinking speed

- mental agility

- language

- understanding

- judgement

Motor skills, eating and drinking are also affected.

People with dementia can become apathetic or uninterested in their usual activities, and have problems controlling their emotions. They may also find social situations challenging, lose interest in socialising, and aspects of their personality may change.

A person with dementia may lose empathy (understanding and compassion), they may see or hear things that other people do not (hallucinations), or they may make false claims or statements.

As dementia affects a person's mental abilities, they may find planning and organising difficult. Maintaining their independence may also become a problem. A person with dementia will therefore usually need help from friends or relatives, including help with decision making.

10.2   Good practice in communicating

The good practice at **8.2** will help you communicate with people with Dementia.

10.3   Useful contacts and resources

The [Dementia Friendly Community Initiative](#) (West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care partnership) initiative works to:

- build general dementia awareness in the community
- develop a Dementia Friendly shopping area involving local traders and retailers
- establish a network of Dementia Awareness trainers throughout the statutory, private and third sector partners in the area
- support individuals and organisation to pledge service improvements and enhancements which could improve the quality of life for those in the area.

NHS Choices [Information on Dementia](#)

11. Assistance Dogs

11.1 Background

Many disabled people rely on an assistance dog to help them with the day to day activities that many take for granted. Dogs are trained to help people with visual impairments, hearing difficulties, epilepsy, diabetes, physical mobility problems and more. Dogs carry out a variety of practical tasks and support peoples' independence and confidence.

11.2 Key advice

Assistance dogs are not pets and highly trained which means they:

- will not wander freely around the premises
- will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to their owner
- are unlikely to foul in a public place
- legally the dogs count as '[Auxiliary Aids](#)'
- make sure you provide water for assistance dogs

Most are recognisable by a harness or jacket, but this is not a legal requirement.

11.3 EHRC Guidance

The [EHRC Guidance on Assistance dogs](#) is designed for all businesses and public sector organisations; a positive step that you can take is to share this guidance within your own organisation, partner organisations and venues.

12.   Personal Assistants

12.1 What is the role of personal assistants?

Personal assistants may support disabled people in variety of ways;

organising and supporting individuals with their social and physical activities

- booking and going with individuals to appointments and meetings

- helping individuals to get to work, college or university

- helping with personal care such as showering and dressing

- supporting with tasks around the house such as shopping, cleaning and cooking

- monitoring their health for example measuring body temperatures or administering medication.

A useful video on the role of assistants is linked here

12.2 Key Points to remember

- Assistants are there to assist the disabled person, not to make decisions for them

- Assistants should always be treated with courtesy