

Guidance on

Improving Physical and Social Accessibility



Introduction

This document brings different information on physical and social accessibility into one guiding document for the purposes of ensuring inclusive services and barrier free environments.

This guidance has been prepared in consultation with Renfrewshire Access Panel, Disability Steering Group and members of the Diversity and Equality Alliance in Renfrewshire Group. Individuals and groups have also been actively involved in contributing information to develop a better understanding of the different social and physical needs of individuals and groups that make up Renfrewshire's diverse population.

Physical and social accessibility requires taking account of individual needs by making reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010. Making reasonable adjustments will help to ensure the achievement of better outcomes and avoidance of unintended consequences of unlawful discrimination.

Reasonable adjustment involves making changes to service delivery, facilities, communications and any other areas to remove barriers faced by people with disabilities and to ensure that no one is 'substantially disadvantaged' in gaining access to services, facilities, employment and information. Reasonable adjustments need to be proportionate and balanced, taking account of the availability of resources.

Some access requirements can be met immediately, for example directions to toilets "exits are at the front of the hall to the audiences right" rather than simply a gesture in that direction that a visually impaired person may not see. Others may involve additional resources or preparation to ensure all types of accessibility requirements are being met.

Actively considering accessibility requirements allows everyone to participate more fully. This supports the development of active engagement on an ongoing basis, helping to shape and inform service delivery and wider decision-making to ensure effective use of resources.

Organising training, conferences and meetings

Pre events—accessibility checklist

- Provide presenters and organisers with reference sheets advising them of what is required to ensure accessible communication, e.g. large print handouts, clear power point presentations
- Allow time prior to the event for the following:
 - ◇ Arranging sign language interpreters, lip speakers, note takers
 - ◇ Converting printed material to alternative formats and/or plain language
 - ◇ Renting audio and assistive listening systems
- Allow time on the day of the event for set-up and testing of audio and assistive listening systems
- Take account of access issues in selecting appropriate venues
- Ensure publicity is accessible and varied in format

Event registration

- Booking forms and event information should be made available or sent to participants asking them to specify any special needs or facilities required. Special facilities could include:
 - ◇ Sign language interpreters
 - ◇ Lip speakers
 - ◇ Assistive listening devices such as a Loop system
 - ◇ Large print/Braille
 - ◇ Special dietary requirements
 - ◇ Wheelchair access
 - ◇ Additional place for carer
 - ◇ Other—participants should be given the chance to specify any other needs that they require

Arrival at event

- Accessible routes to the event
- Accessible parking/drop-off points available close to the facility
- Accessible public transport

Event facility

- Reception—venues should meet the requirements of people with disabilities
- Entrance door(s)—automatic or otherwise, are accessible and help is available to open door(s)
- Accessibility features are operational, e.g. doors and lifts
- Floor surfaces are stable, firm and slip-resistant
- Signage should be tactile and/or easy to see on a glare-free finish and mounted on a contrasting background e.g. black on yellow background
- Lifts can accommodate people using wheelchairs and motorised scooters e.g. accessible control panel, large buttons
- Lifts are equipped with voice indicators
- Public telephones are at an accessible height with volume control and have hearing aid compatibility/textphone
- A designated area is available to relieve and walk guide/service dogs
- Volunteers are in place to greet and assist participants where accessibility is not otherwise possible, e.g. with directions if signage is not clearly visible
- Clear announcements of housekeeping arrangements, e.g. locations of toilets and exits
- Ensure that toilets are accessible, e.g. cubicle has a secured grab bar, sink, toilet and towel dispenser and is equipped with a visual alarm system (flashing light in the event of an emergency)

Physical accessibility

Renfrewshire Access Panel is a local charity operated by volunteers with disabilities striving to ensure Renfrewshire is accessible for all.

Renfrewshire Access Panel is helping statutory, voluntary and community organisations deal with built and external environments, services, education, welfare reform or anything else people have problems accessing.

The help provided by Renfrewshire Access Panel is not limited to people with disabilities; the charity is more than happy to help anyone they can. To ensure that every effort is being made to meet the social and physical accessibility of individuals and groups, Renfrewshire Access Panel recommends that the following are given consideration:

Car park/external approach

- Parking bays are accessible and close to the entrance
- Route from parking bay to building is accessible with dropped kerbs
- Surface of the car park and access way is level, even and of solid materials
- There is adequate lighting
- Access is wide enough

External ramps

- Suitable landings are provided at both ends of the ramps and the width of the ramp is wide enough and suitably graded
- Surfaces are tactile at landings to show change of level and are non-slip with a protected edge
- Suitable handrails are fitted on both sides and project onto landings by at least 300mm

External steps

- External steps are a suitable width and height
- Suitable handrails are fitted on both sides and project onto landings by at least 300mm
- Safety tape on stair edges is in contrasting colour(s)

Entrance doors/lobbies

- The entry door for disabled people is the main entrance door or a side door
- The door opening is wide enough
- The entrance is level with a flush threshold
- There is a vision panel fitted in the door
- The door handle is easy to grip
- The door readily openable
- The glazing in doors/screens is clearly marked
- There is adequate space for wheelchair users to open the door clear of the door swing
- The door mat is flush with the floor
- Lobbies are long enough to allow wheelchair users to move clear of the first door before negotiating the second door

Corridors

- Are wide enough for a wheelchair to manoeuvre and for others to pass
- Are free from obstruction and are well lit
- Suitable signage is provided to show directions clearly
- Floor surfaces are non-slip and of adequate width
- Doorways are clearly identifiable by colour contrasting

Internal doors

- Handles can be easily gripped and are at the correct height
- Doors are easy to open
- Vision panels are provided at a suitable height
- Glass doors are clearly visible when closed
- Are of sufficient width for wheelchair/stick/crutch use
- There is adequate space alongside the leading edge for a wheelchair user to manoeuvre clear of the door swing

Internal ramps

- Suitable landings are provided at both ends of the ramp
- Tactile surfaces are provided at landings to warn of a change of level
- Ramps are wide enough and suitably graded
- Suitable handrails are fitted on both sides and project onto landings by at least 300mm
- Surfaces have a non-slip finish and edges have been protected

Lifts/stairlifts

- Lifts are available in multi-storey buildings
- Lift cars are adequately sized
- Lift controls are easy to reach and incorporate visual or tactile information
- There is a voice indicator to inform passengers of current floor landing and when doors are opening/closing
- The lift location is clearly identified by visual or tactile information
- Support rails are provided in the lift car
- If there is no lift, a platform lift or stairlift is provided instead
- There is adequate signage at the platform or stairlift

Toilets

- An independent disabled facility is provided or doubles for use by able bodied people
- Access to toilets is suitable for all users i.e. lobby size, width and lighting
- WC compartment is large enough to allow manoeuvring into position for safe transfer, either assisted or unassisted, from both sides
- Toilet seat is secure
- Grabrails are suitably designed, installed and fitted in all positions necessary to assist manoeuvring
- Fittings are made of non-conductive materials and are easily distinguishable from the background

- A suitably sized mirror is fitted at an appropriate height
- Door controls, lock and light switch are easily reachable and operable
- Taps are appropriate for use by a person with limited dexterity, grip or strength
- There is an emergency-cord-operated alarm fitted with a cord of an appropriate length

Internal surfaces

- Floor surfaces are non-slip and of adequate width; suitable for the passage of wheelchairs
- Floor and wall surfaces are free from confusing glare or reflections
- Colours, tones and textures are varied to help people distinguish between surfaces and fittings/fixings etc.

General facilities

- Seats are at a suitable height with armrests provided in waiting areas
- Induction loops are fitted at counters with glazed screens or where there is background noise
- Signage is easily identifiable and easy to read i.e. size, colour, contrast and font
- Escape routes are accessible to all
- Facilities are provided for people with severe visual impairment/blindness
- Facilities are provided for those with hearing impairment e.g. loop hole

Working with an interpreter

Telephone interpreting is considered to be an efficient method of communication with customers, clients, service users and visitors who do not use English as a first language or are not fluent in English. Renfrewshire Council's Customer Service Centre and services across the Council have arrangements for a telephone interpreting and translation facility in order to communicate effectively with everyone regardless of their language.

Depending on the situation it might be more appropriate to use telephone interpreting instead of face-to-face interpreting. It is important to remember that telephone interpreting support incurs a charge; it is not a free service and should always be used efficiently and for short conversations. The following guidance is recommended when working with an interpreter:

Brief the interpreter

Identify the name of your organisation to the interpreter, provide specific instructions of what needs to be accomplished and state whether you need help with placing a call. The interpreter can assist you in getting the call off to a good start by introducing you and your facility and then relaying your initial question.

Speak directly to the customer

You and your customer can communicate directly with each other as if the interpreter were not there. The interpreter will relay the information and then communicate the customer's response directly back to you.

Speak naturally, not louder and at your normal pace, not slower

Speak in one or two short sentences at a time. Try to avoid breaking up a thought. Your interpreter is trying to understand the meaning of what you are saying, so express the whole thought if possible. Interpreters will ask you to slow down or repeat if necessary. You should pause to make sure you give the interpreter time to deliver your message.

If something is unclear, or if the interpreter is given a long statement, he or she might ask you for a complete or partial repetition of what was said, or to clarify the statement.

Ask if the limited English speaker (LES) understands

Do not assume that a LES customer understands you. In some cultures a person may say 'yes' as you explain something, not meaning that they understand, but rather that they want you to keep talking because they are trying to follow the conversation. Keep in mind that a lack of English does not necessarily indicate a lack of education.

Do not ask for the interpreter's opinion

The interpreter's job is to convey the meaning of the source language and under no circumstances should he or she allow personal opinion to influence the interpretation. Do not hold the interpreter responsible for what the customer does and does not say, e.g. when the customer does not answer your question.

Everything you say will be interpreted

Avoid private conversations. Everything the interpreter hears will be interpreted. If you feel that the interpreter has not interpreted everything, ask the interpreter to do so. Avoid interrupting the interpreter while he/she is interpreting. Do not use jargon, slang, idioms, acronyms, or technical terms.

Length of interpretation session

When you are working with an interpreter the conversation can often take twice as long as a conversation in English. Many concepts have no equivalent in other languages, so the interpreter may have to describe or paraphrase many terms you use.

Reading scripts

People often talk more quickly when reading a script. When you are reading a script, prepared text, or a disclosure, slow down to give the interpreter a chance to keep up with you.

Culture

Professional interpreters are familiar with the culture and customs of the LES customer. During the conversation, the interpreter may identify and clarify a cultural issue they may think you are not aware of. If the interpreter feels that a particular question is culturally inappropriate, he or she might ask you to rephrase the question or help you to obtain the information in a more appropriate way.

Accessible Information

Introduction

This section is about making information accessible so that it is easy for a range of individuals and groups to understand. The information should be produced in different formats when a request is made or where there is a known need.

Assumptions about information needs should be avoided; it is good practice to ask the individual or group about their information needs and the format that information should be presented or provided to them in.

Presenting information that is accessible

- Use simple language and short sentences to make information easier to understand.
- Use a consistent layout for regular publications e.g. meeting minutes, Board Reports, newsletters, magazines and guides. Be flexible in the formats you present information to people.
- Follow the recommendations of the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) who recommend a default text format of 12pt Arial. A minimum of 14pt should be used for people with learning difficulties. 20pt text should be used for people with visual impairments.
- Use simple language without jargon, acronyms or abbreviations. Keep sentences short and avoid block capitals, italics or underlining. The text should have a ragged right edge and not be fully justified.
- Be mindful that information can be requested in different formats, such as 'easy read' text for people with learning disabilities, Braille, video or audiotape recordings, British Sign Language (BSL) or in different languages.
- It is important to remember that you should always talk to people and ask about their preferred method of receiving information. Most people with learning disabilities or visual impairment do not use Braille as it is a difficult language to use.
- Many deaf and hard of hearing people use BSL, which is their first language, rather than English. To ensure that events, meetings and conferences are inclusive you should check with the organisers whether a BSL interpreter is required.

- There should be good contrast between text and paper; black text on white or yellow paper is best. Never use yellow text on white paper or white text in dark boxes. Every effort should be made to avoid using semicolons (;), colons (:) and lots of commas. You should try to avoid using percentages or large numbers and use digits instead of words, e.g. 7 rather than seven.
- Addresses should be typed or hand written in the format they would appear on an envelope.
- Information should not be translated directly into another language as direct translation from one language into another does not always make sense. When translating information you should be mindful of differences in culture and dialect.

Using images and photographs

Written text can be made easier to understand and more attractive by being illustrated using images such as photographs, drawings or symbols.

- It is important to use positive images of different people and places from different cultures. People's understanding of images varies from culture to culture so consideration should be given to details such as who is in the picture, expressions on faces, clothing, body language and background scenes. Paying attention to small details is more helpful and ensures the information provided is appropriate for the community being addressed.
- Images and pictures should be positioned to the right of text and, where possible, try to use coloured pictures rather than black and white as this is most people's preference.
- You should not use drawings that are childish or patronising. Every care should be taken when humour is being used to illustrate an idea. Often humour can be confusing, and distract from the message.
- Always remember to ask for permission when taking, recording or using photographs of people attending an event or working with you.

Providing information—audio and video

If you know your users are blind or sight impaired, consideration must be given to making information available on audio and visual tapes. Information on CD is easier and cheaper to reproduce and for people to skip from track to track. Remember to keep the audiotape short and indicate to the user when each section is finished, e.g. by indicating 'end'.

- If you are providing CDs/DVDs make sure that shots are close up rather than long or wide. Ensure that verbal communication on audio and video tape is simple and clear. Offer an audio version of the text and a text version of the audio to run at the same time.
- The information being provided in audio or video format requires words to be read out slowly and clearly without sounding patronising. Users need to know when the page is to be turned on the hard copy of any accompanying information, e.g. if music is used this will give the user enough time to turn the page on their hard copy of the information

Ensuring accessibility to emails

It is important that good practice is followed when using emails as a method of communication in order to be inclusive and ensure that information is accessible.

- When sending emails always use plain language and avoid jargon. Use a clear sans serif font at a minimum size of 12pt and avoid using caps (ALL CAPS), multiple exclamation marks (!!!!!) pound (£) and dollar signs (\$), and multiples of any characters.
- Avoid emphasising text using bold, italics or underlining text; instead use a phrase such as 'please note'.
- Newsletters should be produced in plain text for easy reading by assistive technology, e.g. screen readers. HTML versions of newsletters should be designed to accessibility standards and guidelines.

More information

A wide range of information, advice, equipment and training can be sourced from various local and national organisations. They can help you to ensure that physical and social accessibility needs are met by making the necessary reasonable adjustments:

Deafblind Scotland

Deafblind Scotland is an organisation that works specifically with people who have a dual sensory impairment to help them live as rightful members of their own communities and encourage contact between Deafblind people and sighted hearing people.

Deafblind Scotland also provide highly trained Guide/Communicators to be the eyes and ears of dual sensory impaired people ensuring safe mobility and accessible information in preferred communication formats, i.e. British Sign Language, Deafblind Manual, hand on signing etc.

For more information:

Visit the website **www.deafblindscotland.org.uk**

Telephone **0141 777 6111**

Email **info@deafblindscotland.org.uk**

Deaf Connections

Deaf Connections is a Glasgow based voluntary organisation delivering specialist services to deaf people across Scotland. Collaborating with agencies to promote the interest of people in the Deaf community focusing on quality of life, independence and social inclusion.

You can find out more on their website **www.deafconnections.co.uk**

Action on Hearing Loss

Action on Hearing Loss, the new name for RNID, is working for a world where hearing loss doesn't limit or label people and where people value and look after their hearing. Action on Hearing Loss offer an information line, care and support and people support.

Call the free helpline **0808 808 0123**

Visit the website **www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk**

Global Language Services

Global Language Services provide skilled professional interpreters and translators in different languages who are experienced in face-to-face and telephone interpreting. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Telephone **0141 4293429**

Email **mail@globaklanguageservices.co.uk**

Renfrewshire Access Panel

Renfrewshire Access Panel is a diverse access panel working with individuals and members from local and national groups towards making Renfrewshire accessible for all.

Contact details as follows:

10 Falcon Crescent, Paisley, PA3 1NS

Telephone **07747036028**

Email **renfrewshireaccesspanel@hotmail.com**

Web **www.renfrewshireaccesspanel.org.uk**

Renfrewshire Council

Renfrewshire Council offers a range of services to residents with a significant sensory impairment. Services include information and advice, rehabilitation, skill training and supply of specialist equipment. The aim is to help people with sensory impairment to live independently and achieve a good quality of life.

For more information on the services available use the details below:

Email **adultservicesreferral.sw@renfrewshire.gcsx.gov.uk**

Telephone **0141 618 2584** | Textphone **0141 848 7232**

Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI)

SASLI was established in 1981 to maintain a register of trained and qualified BSL/English interpreters to carry out interpreting jobs. SASLI continues to work with deaf BSL users to increase understanding and awareness of the role and function of BSL/English interpreters, and to provide opportunities for deaf BSL users to work with SASLI members to enhance their interpreting skills and competence.

Suite 196, Central Chambers, 93 Hope Street. Glasgow G2 6LD

Telephone **0141 248 8159** | Fax **0141 221 1693**

Email **mail@sasli.co.uk**

If you would like information in another language or format please ask us.

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innej formie, prosimy dać nam znać.

Tel: **0300 300 0330**

Email: **chiefexec@renfrewshire.gov.uk**

For further assistance, guidance and information please contact:

Renfrewshire Access Panel **07747 036 028**

Renfrewshire Council's Chief Executive's Service **0141 618 7404**