



Centre for
Independent
Living CIC

Access Standards for User Led Organisations



Aim of document:

- To show, from SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living's experience, how User Led Organisations (ULO) can ensure their services are accessible to all Disabled People (Including people with sensory and learning impairments)

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<https://spiritdisabilityplatform.wordpress.com/>

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SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living was formed in 1984, by Disabled People¹ to provide information, advice and services to Disabled People to enable them to Live Independently. We are a User Led Organisation (ULO).

As we are an organisation that supports all Disabled People, we set high standards for ourselves to ensure we are able to provide accessible, inclusive and empowering services to all Disabled People.

These are the access guidelines we have developed for ourselves, and we hope this document is useful for other ULO's

Accessible information provision is of key importance in delivering these standards, and therefore SPECTRUM requires that information produced by the organisation must be available in a range of different accessible formats, to ensure that no Disabled Person is denied access to our services or information due to their impairment.

All our staff are therefore required to abide by the access standards, as set out in this document at all times (even for internal communication – we find that enabling staff to get into the routine of producing a minimum accessible information standard for all information and communications fosters good practice).

Our access standards are an important part of SPECTRUM's identity and reputation.

¹ By Disabled People we refer to people with any form of impairment, including people with a physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological, emotional, age related or any other hidden impairment(s). We therefore include people with learning difficulties, Deaf People, Blind and visually impaired people, mental health system users and survivors, people living with chronic illness and Older People with age related impairments.





To aid general accessibility, SPECTRUM's policy standard is that all printed materials must be produced in a font size of at least 14, in a 'san-serif' font (for example Arial, Calibri or Comic Sans).

Text should generally be left-justified to aid accessibility. Where practical, a font size of 16 should be used as this is considered 'large-print' and will therefore be accessible to more people. Font sizes of less than 14 should not be used unless there are exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of your Line Manager.

Terms such as 'Disabled People', 'Older People' and 'Independent Living' should **always** have their first letters capitalised. These are political terms indicating ownership and should be respected in the same way we capitalise people's names.

Abbreviations should be avoided whenever possible, and in all cases they should only be used when they are fully expanded the first time they are used in every document (for example HCC [Hampshire County Council]). The use of abbreviations will exclude anyone who does not understand what they mean, and they often make documents more difficult to read.

Care should be given to ensure that there is a high level of contrast between text colour and background/paper colour. Text overlaid on images or designs should be avoided at all times.

Avoid the use of CAPITAL LETTERS FOR HEADINGS. Strings of capital letters can be more difficult to read for visually impaired people, and in any case can give the impression you are shouting at your reader.

Care should also be given to avoid the unnecessary use of jargon and complex words which make information less accessible. Please examine what you write and consider if any of the words you use are not in common use, or could be substituted for simpler words. SPECTRUM encourages the use of 'Plain English' throughout its published information.

Whilst it may not be realistic for all documents to be proof-read, please take care to ensure all official reports, leaflets and other formal documents which represent SPECTRUM and its views are proof-read by someone with these skills before distributing.





SPECTRUM has a policy of pro-actively assessing what other accessible formats might be required in particular circumstances. Common accessible formats include: Large Print, Easy Read, Audio Format, Braille and Easy Read.

General information (for example leaflets and booklets) produced by SPECTRUM should be quickly and willingly converted to these or other specifically requested formats on request. Depending on the nature and purpose of the information, it may be appropriate to have stocks of different formats available 'off-the-shelf'.

Information concerning how these alternative formats can be produced should be held centrally by the organisation, detailing what can be produced in house and what needs to be sourced via an external organisation.





SPECTRUM requires that all meetings and events it organises are accessible to all. This will include using British Sign Language at any public meeting.

Information to be used at meetings should be available in the following formats: Standard Print, Large Print, Audio Tape and Braille, unless the organiser is sure of who is attending and what their access needs will be.

SPECTRUM feels that it is a mistake to only provide information in a specified accessible format if explicitly asked. This creates a feeling by the person that they are asking for something that is difficult or unusual. All people should have the same right to expect information to be in a format they can understand. Think for instance if you went to a meeting where all communication was in British Sign Language – you would feel excluded and would be uncomfortable asking for a more accessible format wouldn't you?

The following is the checklist which SPECTRUM uses to ensure meetings are accessible:

In Advance of the Meeting:

- Venue informed of numbers attending – including any access requirements
- Venue informed of table/chair needs (remember to leave spaces for anyone using a wheelchair) (If possible provide a variety of seats – some people like arms on chairs, or higher seating positions etc)
- Venue food/drink – research dietary needs
- Venue checked for access (accessible entrance, doors, toilets etc)
- Venue checked for accessible car or van parking. Check also if barriers are in place to restrict access to parking areas (Many Disabled People are unable to use barrier systems due to lack of mobility)
- Book Sign Language Interpreters
- Book Public Address system (microphones) + loop system
- Booked speakers – make sure they are aware of the need for accessible presentation and provide guidance as appropriate
- Book Personal assistants if possible (2 recommended) to assist Disabled People (food, toilets etc)



- Ensure any information to be used is available in required formats
- Ensure needs of participants are known in advance as far as possible

On the day of the meeting:

- Ensure any reception staff are well briefed about any expected access requirements, and that they know what to do if someone arrives with an access need which is unexpected. First point of contact is all important.
- Take money cheques etc to pay for any travel costs. Accept that some Disabled People can only attend if they have a Personal Assistant to support them. Be prepared and supportive of meeting the costs of this
- Food & Drinks: Need to ensure enough space for any food and drinks. Some Disabled People will need extra space to manoeuvre (especially wheelchair users for instance)
- Ensure reception has full information of people's needs, and copies of any agenda's and other information in the range of formats that participants will need
- Ensure any badges are printed in at least 16point text to maximise the ability of people to read people's names

At the beginning of the meeting:

- Check loop system/Microphones are working OK
- Introduce Sign Language Interpreter
- Introduce any Personal Assistants – so that participants know who they are
- Remind people that if anyone wants to speak, they must wait for the Microphone to arrive
- Remind people that we be inclusive and ask for confident speakers to leave space for those who are not so confident to talk
- Toilets – say where they are
- Fire exits – say where they are
- Say if you will be taking photos– if anyone is unhappy to be included ask to speak now...
- Remind people that if anyone needs anything, just ask

After the Meeting:

- Ensure that any learning points concerning any access failures are communicated to the organisation so that consideration can be made to avoid the same issues happening again





Please remember that your organisation's reputation for inclusion and accessibility are only as good as the working practices of its staff and volunteers.

It is the responsibility of all staff to take care at all times to ensure everything we do and everything we produce is done with the intention of being as inclusive and accessible as possible.

Recognise that, in practice, there will be occasions when we unintentionally exclude individuals because we have failed to meet their access needs.

When this happens, it is very important that the organisation accepts responsibility for the failure, even if we had no way of pre-empting the need in advance. In no circumstances should we imply that the individual who we have excluded is in any way to blame.

The most important issue is to learn from any access failures. Think about what can be done in future and ensure that procedures (like this one) are updated to reflect any new learning that needs to be implemented.







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