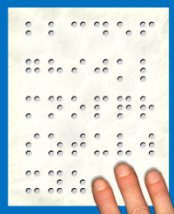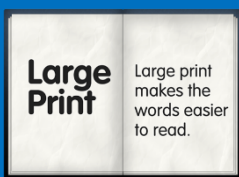# Accessible Communications Policy.

How we communicate with people in a way they can understand.

2022 - 2024

Please contact us if you would like this policy in another format (for example on CD or MP3)
communications@sefton.gov.uk.

Index

Why we need this policy

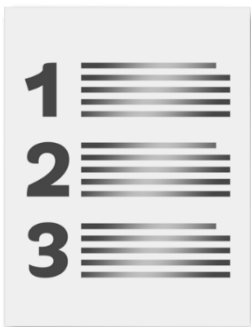A policy says how we are going to do something.
Information from Sefton Council
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The Laws

- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014
- Accessible Information Standard
Pages 6 – 8

What are we doing

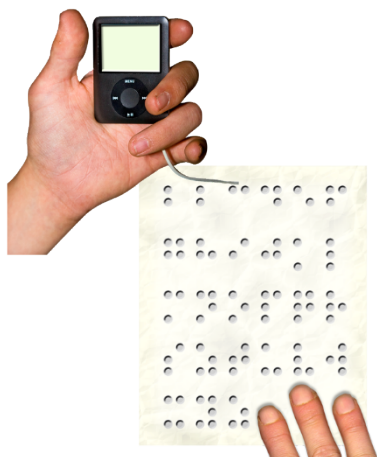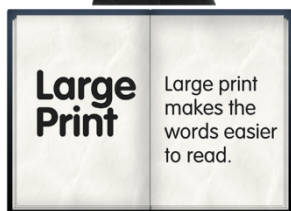- Staff Support
- Website
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When we say we in this document, it means Sefton Council.

Difficult words are in **bold** and there is an explanation next to them.

Why do we need this policy?

We want to make sure people who use our services can

- Find the information they need.
- Get information in a way they can understand.
- Get in touch with us easily.

People are different but all people need information in a way that they can understand.

This means we need information in different formats.

This could be in

- Easy Read.
- Large Print.
- Audio - so people can listen to information (like on a CD or MP3).
- Braille - which is used by some people who are visually impaired.

Why do we need this policy?

Sefton Council wants to make **all** its information easy for everyone to understand.

We do this by

- Writing in plain English.

- Using larger font sizes as standard.

- Not using jargon or big words or explaining them if we must use them.

- Coproducing public Information.

- Making sure our websites are accessible.

- Have alternative ways to find and use information.
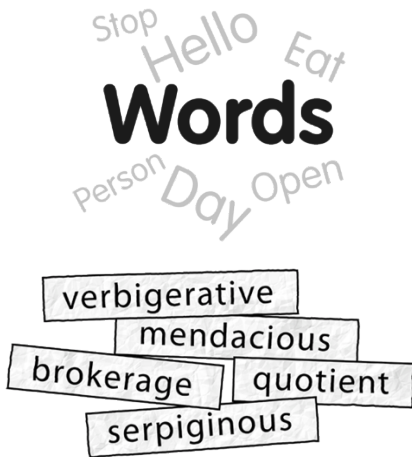
If a person does not understand, then they cannot make choices.

This policy says how we will continue to do this.

Sefton Council Information

Sefton Council has lots of different jobs to do. Things like

- Bin collections.
- Benefit advice.
- Libraries.
- Sports and leisure.
- Parking, roads and travel.
- Planning and building control.
- Schools and learning.
- Environmental protection.
- Public Health.
- Children's and Adult Social Care.

Councillors - A councillor is someone you and people in your area vote for. They work for your local council.

They make big decisions about your area.

Most people in Sefton use some or all these things.

The information we give to people is important. We want to make sure that as many people can understand it. We are working to make **all** our public information easier to understand.

The Laws

Equalities Act 2010

The Equalities Act 2010 says we have to make **reasonable adjustments** for people who have protected characteristics. This could be age, race, disability, and others.

There is more information about [Protected characteristics](#) on the Equality and Human rights website.

A **reasonable adjustment** is a change that has been made to a service so that anyone can use them especially those with a disability.

Public Sector Equalities Duties.

The Public Sector Equalities Duties are specific rules for public services.

These rules make sure people are not treated differently if they have a protected characteristic.

These rules are for when public services make decisions about how they make plans and provide services. This includes accessibility of information.

Some areas of the Council have specific laws they also must follow.

For example, Social Care has the **Care Act 2014** which says -

Local councils must have good information to help people to understand their options and to choose the right care and support.

The guidance says: Council's must give information and advice to everyone who wants it, not just people who have their care and support paid for by the council.

NHS England – Accessible Information Standard 2016.

The Accessible Information Standard tells health and social care services how to make information accessible for the following people

- Patients.

- Users of Social Care services.

- Their parents and carers.

This includes making sure that people get information in different formats if they need it.
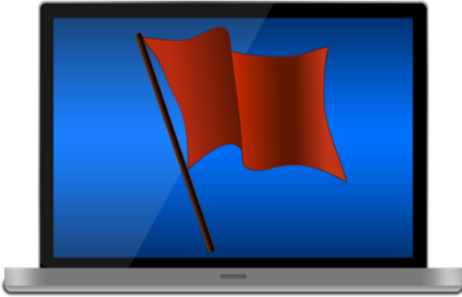
The Accessible Information Standard says that we need to

1. **Ask** people if they have any information or communication needs and find out how to meet their needs.

2. **Record** on our systems those needs and how they can me met.

3. **Highlight** a person's social care file, so they have information or communication needs, and clearly explain how those needs should be met.

4. **Share** information about a person's communication needs with NHS and social care providers, when they have given permission.

5. **Meet the need** - make sure that people get information in an accessible way and communication support if they need it.

What are we doing

- We use clear language in all our publications and on our website.

- We follow the rules to make sure our website can be used by those who choose and need to use it.

- We will tell people how they can get information in other formats on social media and in our buildings.

- When **consulting** which means asking for people's ideas about how we do things, we make sure there are different formats so all people can get involved.

- We regularly attend meetings of groups with different communication needs.

- We send out important reports or information in different formats.

- We want to use British Sign Language in publicity and information campaigns.

- We use images of people that represents the diversity of everyone in our communities.

What we are doing

Staff Support
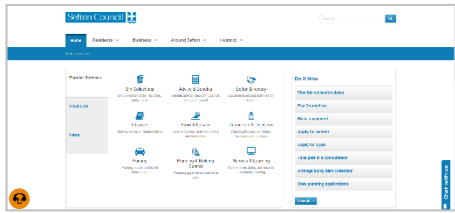
- We have Accessible Information Advocates (staff volunteers) to support accessibility of Sefton Council.

- We have Accessible Information eLearning for our staff to understand why we must produce information in accessible formats.

- There is an Accessible Information section of the Intranet with useful resources and advice.

- Colleagues are supported and share skills when developing accessible information.

- Councillors and senior leaders in the Council support their departments to make sure their information is accessible.

- We continue to work with the Improving Information Group and other groups to learn how we can make improvements.

What we are doing

Website

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are guides about how to make websites.

- Following these guides enables people with all abilities to interact with our websites and access all the functions and features it has.

- Being WCAG compliant allows people with disabilities that use assistive technology to interact with our websites.

- We will make sure our websites are as accessible as possible. We will keep testing how it works with people and technology and make any changes we can.

- We will use the accessibility tool Recite Me on our website to give people choices about how they get the information.

- We are increasing the use of BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters in our videos.

What we are doing

Reasonable Adjustments
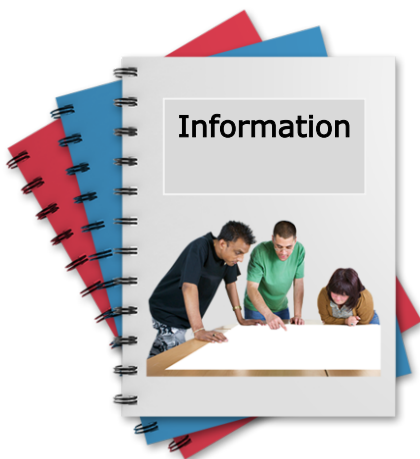
- We make reasonable adjustments in how we communicate. We will also work with people to find the best way for us to communicate with each other.

- We tell people about this accessible communications policy, including our staff and services outside the Council.

- We have Accessible Information Advocates to support this way of working throughout the Council.

- We help and train our staff to produce information in accessible formats.

- We will change how we provide our services to support people.

- We do not use websites as the only way to give information.

What we are doing
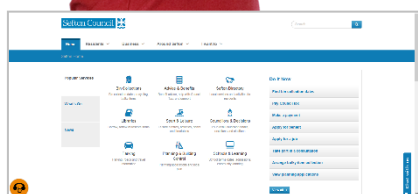
- We will continue to work to make all Sefton Council public information easier to understand.

- Information we already have, will carry on being changed into accessible formats.

- New information will be made in a way that more people can understand.

- We will put information onto the Council's website in an easy to understand way.

- Recite Me works on the Council's website to give information in many ways. It can:

  - Read webpages out loud including in different languages.

  - Change the font, colour, size and contrast of the website.

  - Add a ruler to keep your place on the page.

  - Display just the information and no images.

I am Recite Me …I read out any words from the website…and so much more!

Helping people to tell us what they think

For services to work well they must be **coproduced.** This means services working with the people who use them.

A group of experts by experience are helping to guide us on how we can make information accessible.

They are called the Improving Information Group.

The group are people from Sefton who have different information or communication support needs.

This maybe because they have a disability, impairment, or sensory loss.

Sefton Council support this group by arranging

- Accessible meetings and workshops.
- Speakers.
- Interpreters.
- Completing agreed actions.

For more information contact michelle.anglesea@sefton.gov.uk
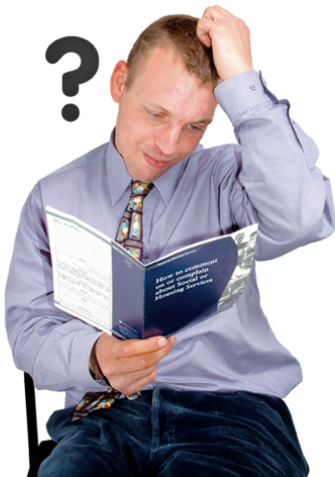
Improving information Group's Plan on 2 pages

Improving Information Group Plan - Page 1

Improving Information Group Plan 2022 - 2023

What we want to achieve

For the Council to make it easier for people to find and receive good quality information in a way they need it.

What we will do

Make sure all public information is provided in a way that people understand.

Make sure that people who do consultation do it in a way that includes everyone.

Support people who work for Sefton Council and Sefton Partnership to make information better.

Help to raise awareness of how members of the public can access accessible information and services.

Improving Information Group Plan - Page 2

Improving Information Group Plan 2022 - 2023

How will we do it

Increase how many **Accessible Information Advocates in the Council and Sefton Partnership** has to support making more information accessible.

Staff have the **resources** needed to produce a range of accessible information.

Support Accessible Information Advocates when needed and promote Accessible information including Awareness **training** for all Council staff.

Make sure the **membership** of the Improving Information Group has involvement from people with different communication needs.

Support people who are carrying out **consultations and feedback** to include everyone.

Support Projects to include Accessible information and services

Support the Websites to be more accessible including using more **BSL interpreters on videos**

How we will know it has happened

We have active Accessible Information Advocate in all parts of the Council and Sefton Partnership. ☐
More people get information in ways they need. ☐

Staff can use resources to produce different types of information. ☐

Support is available for Accessible Information Advocates. ☐
Accessible Information Training co-produced and available to all Council and Partnership staff. ☐

Members of the group have a wide range of experiences and share these with others . ☐

Consultation and feedback plans to include actions to provide information in the way needed and look at how to involve all people. ☐

Projects include accessible Information when being developed and completed. ☐

More people will be able to use the websites as there will be more accessibility features on them. ☐