# NEURODIVERSITY

# GUIDELINES ON INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

The ability to read and understand text can be affected by the way in which it has been written and produced. If you are producing information to be read by others, it is important to remember between 10% to 20% of your readers may be neurodivergent. Using clear language and accessible text design will improve readability and accessibility for all readers, but especially for those who have dyslexia or other neurodivergent profiles.

The following are some simple recommendations to help ensure that your communications are clear and accessible.

# Writing Style

- It is best to keep text as simple and concise as possible, to aid navigation and comprehension.

- Keep sentences short and well-punctuated (15-20 words per sentence on average).

- Give clear instructions, and avoid lengthy explanations.

- It helps to imagine the reader is sitting opposite you and you are talking directly to them. Use 'I', 'we' and 'you' to make it clear who you are writing about.

- Use short words and terms where possible, avoiding unnecessary complex vocabulary and corporate jargon.

- Avoid the use of abbreviations and acronyms, and clearly explain all terminology. For longer documents, a glossary of key terms is helpful.

- Review your text and remove unnecessary words and phrases.

# Presentation Style

- Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Try to break text into short readable units.

- Use wide margins and headings.

- Use at least 1.15 line spacing between lines of text, or 1.5 if possible.

- Keep text left justified with a ragged right edge. This helps readers to track where they are in the text.

- Use bold print to highlight. Italics and underline should be avoided as they can blur text.

- Use colour to highlight important text, or use a text box.

# Font Style

- Use a san serif font such as Arial, Calibri, Verdana, Century Gothic or Tahoma.

- Use a minimum of 12pt or 14pt font size.

- Avoid unnecessary use of capitals. Using all capital letters can make it harder to read (for everyone), and it can also appear that you are shouting at the reader.

- Increase the spacing between letters in text – research shows that this has the most impact for improving reading speed (even more so than font selection which can be down to personal reference).

# Paper

- Use a coloured paper, even cream or off white.  Some individuals may have specific colour preferences, e.g. yellow or blue.

- Use matt paper to reduce glare.

- Don't use flimsy paper which may allow text from the other side to show through.

# Posters, Graphic Designs and Videos

- Keep designs simple, and avoid visual clutter.

- Avoid background graphics behind text, as they can make text hard to read; similarly avoid moving text.

- Keep essential information grouped together, such as the time, date and place of an event.

# Universal Accessibility

Everyone has different preferences for how they access information. While some people may prefer longer wordy explanations, others may need alternative presentation styles.

- Include useful pictures and graphics.

- Flow charts can help to explain procedures.

- Lists of "do's and don'ts" can be more useful than long passages of text.

- A glossary will help to explain abbreviations, acronyms and jargon.

- Longer documents should have a contents guide at the beginning and an index at the end.

- It's important to provide documents in a timely manner to allow time for reading.

- In tandem with making all text as accessible as possible, organisations should also provide information in a variety of formats, for example, audio, video, and digital files. It is very important that staff and clients are made aware of the availability of these alternative formats.

# Website Design

- Good website design is also important for individuals with dyslexia and other disabilities. Website accessibility should be checked regularly.

- A website should be easy to navigate with clear menus; a site map is helpful.

- Use images and videos, where appropriate, to break up text.

- **Ensure that the website is designed so that it is compatible with text to speech software.**

- **Provide users with options so that they can customise your website to suit their needs, e.g. colour, font size, font type.**