Scrutiny Inquiry Panel - Accessible Southampton

Thursday, 20th January, 2022
at 5.30 pm
PLEASE NOTE TIME OF MEETING
Virtual Meetings - Virtual meeting

This meeting is open to the public

Members

Councillor Vaughan (Chair)
Councillor Rayment (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Coombs
Councillor Guest
Councillor Streets

Contacts
Mark Pirnie - Scrutiny Manager 023 8083 3886

8 **PRESENTATIONS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION** (Pages 1 - 60)

Thursday 20 January 2022   Service Director, Legal & Governance

SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living

Access Inquiry – Meeting 4

What contributes to good accessibility in information & Communication

From Disabled People's Viewpoint

Ian Loynes, Chief Executive, SPECTRUM

Think you know Disabled People ... Think Again

Information & Communications: Contents

- General principles

- Should SCC have an Information standard?

  - What are the considerations?

- Disability Language

- Other aspects of printed informaiom

- Internet v non-internet

- Meetings accessible to the general public

General principles

- Information and communication should be written to be understandable to the audience in question
    - Disabled People are as intelligent as anyone else
    - Disabled People may be patients, they can also be doctors
    - Disabled People may be in audience or presenting on stage
- If information or communication is aimed at the 'general public' then it needs to ensure that it will be accessible and understandable to all equality groups (including Disabled People)
- Consider if all intended audience will be able to access your chosen communication method
    - Is just one communication method enough?
- Use Plain English
- Make it easy for staff to get it right
- Provision of accessible info **should not be a cost issue**

Should SCC have an Information standard?

- If so what should it include?

- A Standard: which meets the needs of most

  - Font: Sans-Serif (Arial, Calibri) not **Serif** or 𝒮𝒸𝓇𝒾𝓅𝓉

  - Font Sized: Minimum 14pt

  - Good contrast between text and background

  - Keep text and graphics separate: don't overlay

  - Explain abbreviations and acronyms: preferably don't use them

  - Jargon: Not unless audience really uses it

  - Don't CAPITALISE HEADING'S

  - Use Plain English or Easy Read

  - Timely and too the point

  - Remember who your audience is

- Ability to easily produce other formats 'on demand'

- If online: Changeable: fonts, sizes colours

- If video: Subtitles & Audio Description

Disability Language

- Words are important: Not 'PC gone mad'

- Just common decency: Don't use words that people don't like
    - In the same way as certain words to describe Race:
        - 'N' word and 'P' words for instance are completely taboo
    - But words to describe Disabled People, that we find just as offensive such as 'Handicapped' or 'Bed/House Bound' are still routinely used (and often inaccurate!)

- SPECTRUM presents separately as evidence our guidance leaflet 'The Language of Disability' which provide best practice

Other aspects of printed information

- Just as some people prefer information in non-English languages, some Disabled People need information in other formats
  - IE: BSL, Braille, Audio, Easy Read, Makaton:

<-Easy Read

Makaton ->

Other aspects of printed information

Continued...

- SCC in their Information Standard *(prev slide)* will need to decide if such formats are available as standard, or on request
  - And staff know where to go to get such formats
- Client information should include preference for how they would like their information provided
- All general information should say that other formats are available on request

Internet v non-internet

- Whilst its hard/dangerous to generalise, many people still do not have access to the Internet

  - Many of those people will already be near the bottom of the social equality equation

  - Some people simply cannot afford capital/ongoing costs

  - Some people don't want to use it, or can't

- Yet more and more the only way to gain a service or information is via the Internet

  - Access to services/information must remain available in a variety of ways

  - Invest in schemes which provide equipment / training to encourage more to benefit from the Internet

Internet should provide a range of accessibility controls

- Many providers will check if website is Accessible eg RNIB

- Controls which enable size/colour changes

- Picture descriptions

- Subtitle / BSL videos / Easy Read options

- Provide easy access to a human being (easy to find Phone number)

Meetings for the General Public

- Far to many public meetings are still inaccessible to Disabled People

    - Either physical access

    - Equipment (Mic / Loop System) not working / installed

    - No access to BSL for instance

- Part of access statement *(eg public meetings will always be held in accessible venues)*

- Checklist to ensure accessible meetings

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Think you know Disabled People ... Think Again

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Communication Access UK

Aims

- To know the purpose of the communication access symbol

- To understand the standards and apply them using the TALK prompt

- To better understand the types of communication difficulties and the barriers people face

- To think about how services can be changed to meet people's needs

Communication Access the Background

- Communication disability is often hidden
- Barriers created by others
- Complaints are often about communication
- Inclusive communication reaches a wider audience
- Good communication benefits everyone!

Drawing EMail
Looking Speech
Shouting Gesture
Touch Pictures Writing
Phone Pointing Whispering
SocialMedia Symbols
Understanding Sounds
BodyLanguage AAC
FacialExpression Crying
Listening
Laughter
Photos

Choosing a communication symbol for the UK

?

Access symbols for
- Physical
- Hearing
- Vision

THINKSTOCK

The UK symbol for Communication Access

Displaying a communication access symbol means:

- a business is meeting set standards

- people with communication support needs are welcome
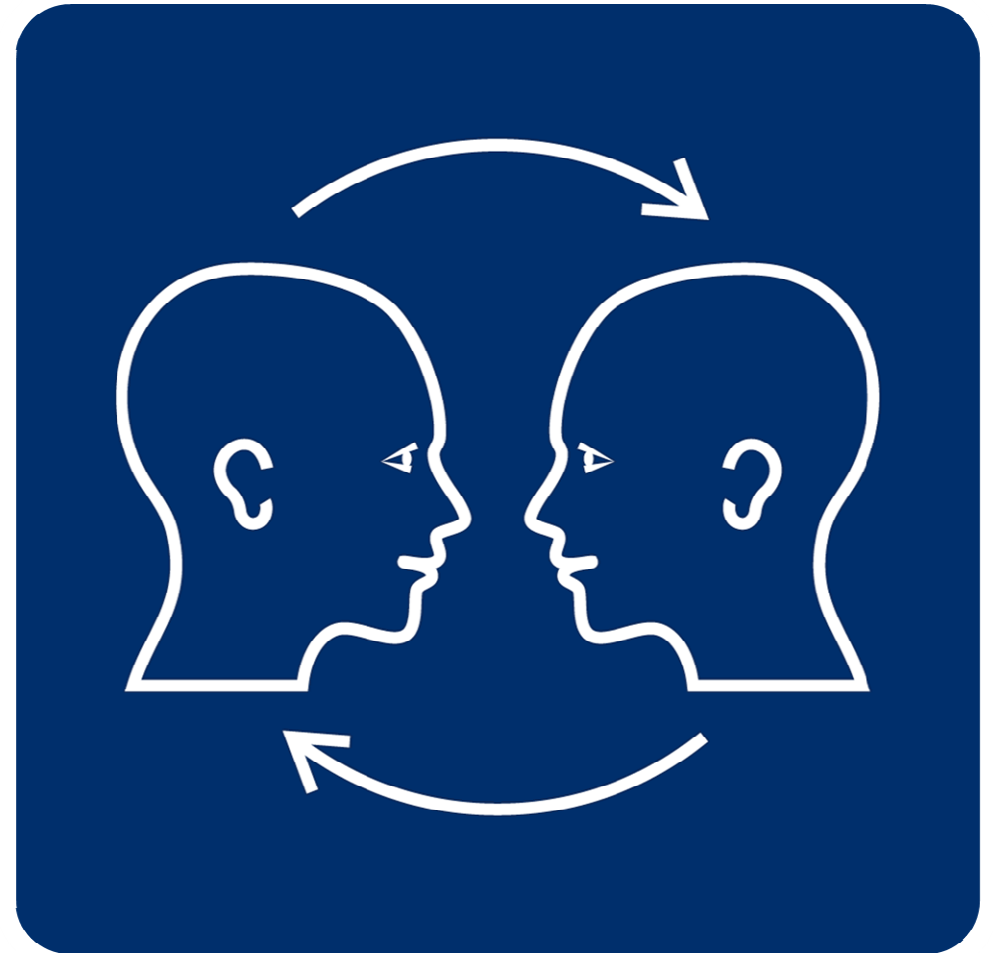
Conditions which may cause a communication difficulty

- Personal stories and experience of:

Learning Disabilities, Cerebral palsy, autism, stammering, stroke, head injury, Parkinson's, Motor Neurone Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, voice disorders, dementia…………

Statistics-Population of UK 65 million

- 20% experiencing communication difficulty at some point in their lives

- 10% of all children starting school have some form of language disorder

- 1.5 million people with a learning disability

- 1.2 million STROKE survivors

- 127,000 living with PARKINSONS DISEASE

- 5000 living with MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE

- 700,000 on the AUTISTIC spectrum

- 850,000 living with DEMENTIA

Why?

Building inclusive and accessible communities

Disability Discrimination Act 1995, 2005 in Northern Ireland
Equality Act 2010 in England, Scotland and Wales

- The laws state that someone with a disability should be able to visit places, buy things, have fun, get help and get information just like anyone else

- People with disabilities should be treated fairly at work but also at college, in shops and restaurants, on public transport and especially by public organisations

- It is necessary to make '*Reasonable Adjustments*' to accommodate people with disabilities

- This includes people with a communication disability

What makes a good communication experience? (Video)

What can we do?

|	
1	**Make me welcome** **Respect** my communication difficulty, **engage** and **support** me and **don't make assumptions**
2	**Give me TIME** Be **patient,** give me time to communicate, do not rush or ignore me
3	**Speak directly to me** Speak **to me** (rather than to the person with me) with appropriate **eye contact**
4	**ASK what helps. Adapt your communication if needed** You may need to use **gesture**, slow your speech and emphasize important words.
5	**LISTEN carefully** Pay attention and **ask me to repeat** if you do not understand**. Check I have understood.**
6	**Use written or picture information to support the communication and KEEP TRYING** When needed, use **pictures**, write things down in plain English, and provide **accessible information** in the appropriate form

Prompt TALK

Time
Ask what helps
Listen (and **L**ook)
Keep Trying

STANDARDS (applicable at organisational and individual level)	ACTIONS (how to meet standards at organisational and individual level)	OPERATIONAL INDICATORS (how do I know I am getting it right)
...cognise every group includes people ...h communication support needs	Put in place: • Public commitment to inclusive communication • Good practice guidelines for all modes of communication • Core Training	• Adoption of Communication Access symbol • Rolling programme of staff training • Offer a range of communication options • Staff know and apply TALK prompt TIME/ASK/LISTEN/KEEP TRYING
...d out what support is required by the ...ople you are set up to serve	• Data collection • Ask what helps	Mechanisms in place for individuals to share their communication preferences
...ke action in all communications	• Physical environment • Rolling training programme • Resources • Accessible Information	Individuals are: • Welcomed • Given time • Listened to • Given accessible information Feedback from service users and staff
...ep Trying	• Monitor performance • Take action to improve	• Annual self-monitoring framework • Regular public statement on meeting standards and actions to be taken to improve

Checking it out
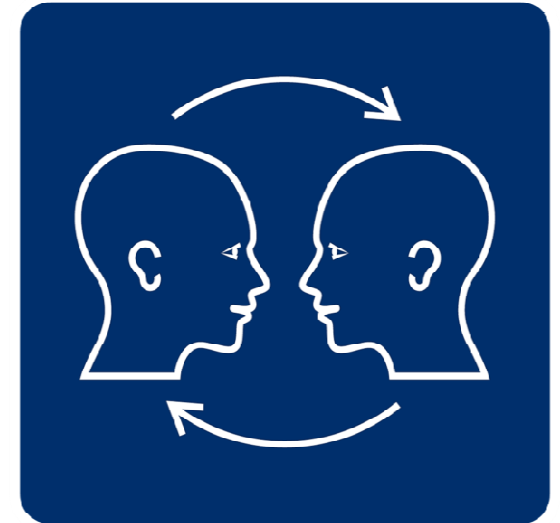
- Self assessment
- Monitoring Framework
- Annual review
- Mystery Customer visit

Making it happen – 'implementation'

- Identify a champion in your organisation
- Learn and apply the TALK prompt
- Display the symbol across your organisation
- Conform to the standards
- Ensure new staff are appropriately trained
- A mystery customer visit may be arranged
- Your organisation will be promoted as Communication Accessible

For more information
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Accessibility - Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

James Marshall – Head of Customer and Communications

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What we will cover

- Customer access strategy

- Accessibility standards

- Access by channels

- Digital inclusion

- Translations

- Challenges

- Future plans

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Customer access strategy

*We want to put **all of our customers** at the heart of everything we do, reflecting their feedback in the design and delivery of services, and to provide **appropriate support to those who need it** ensuring that customer experiences are **easy, effective and convenient**.*

 Access principles:

- Centralised front door

- Triage and signpost

- Choice of channel (and location)

- Reducing unnecessary contact

- Every interaction matters

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Accessibility standards

- Always start with the user/customer

- Give people options

- Design for the user who will find it the hardest

- Plain English is critical

- Keep it simple

- Listen to feedback and review regularly

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Accessibility by channel

- Simplified journeys (fewer options)

- We receive Type talk calls

- If no option selected the customer gets two chances before disconnection

- We can talk customers through forms or complete forms for them if required

- We have a translation service which we can set up three way calls

- We post out forms to those who can't access online

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Accessibility by channel
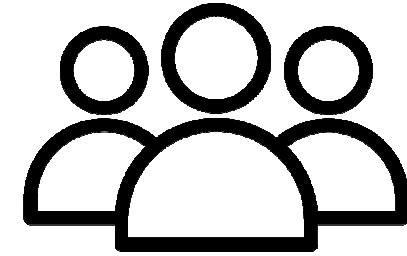
Face to face (Gateway)

- Accessible self-serve computers

- Translators and BSL interpreters bookable

- Flat floor access

- Disabled toilet

- Staff trained and experience in supporting individuals

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Accessibility by channel
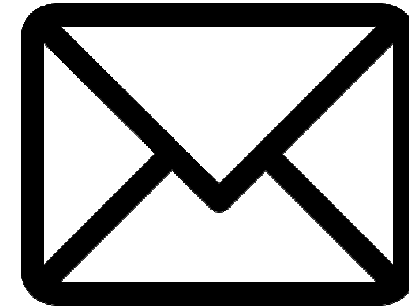
- Our corporate email system is compatible with screen readers and other accessibility tools

- We alt-tag images

- We use plain English and adhere to the corporate style guide

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Accessibility by channel

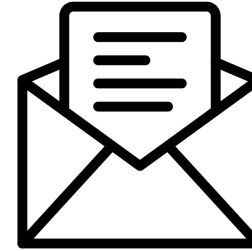- Use letters where appropriate to the audience
- Guidance outlines key considerations:
  - Plain English
  - Minimum size 12 font
  - Use Ariel
  - Make accessible versions available
  - Use corporate template

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Web accessibility

Current accessibility ratings:

WCAG Level A

99.6%

WCAG Level AA (statutory requirement)

99.2%

WCAG Level AAA

91.3%

As measured by Silktide app on January 14, 2022

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Compliance by WCAG level over time
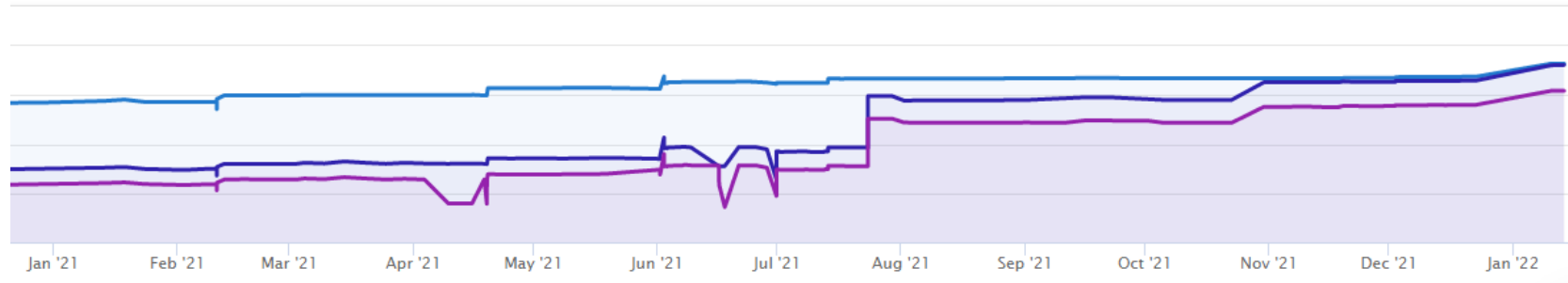
Level A | **Level AA** | **Level AAA**

- AA rating increased from 67% at start of January 2021 to 99.2% now

- New Content Management System was launched at end of June 2021

- Huge leap in accessibility in late July was as a result of various template changes enabled by the new Content Management System

As measured by Silktide app on January 14, 2022

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Some of the web accessibility changes made

- Added scope tags to our HTML tables to help screen readers

- Issues with poor colour contrast sorted

- Filling in all missing alt text on images

- All issues of duplicate link text going to different addresses fixed

- Most issues with keyboard tabbing sorted

- ALL templates undergoing testing to make sure they meet AA criteria

- Reduction in use of images with text with them

- Web links now wrapping to stop screens scrolling in both directions at high magnification

- All web team members underwent accessibility training

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Further web accessibility changes planned

- **Making focus effects clearer across the website**

- **Working with third party software providers to make sure their apps on our website meet guidelines**

- **Manual testing to pick up any accessibility failings not picked up by our testing software**

- **New templates, all rigorously tested for accessibility**

- **Looking at making our pdfs and other documents accessible – and in some cases turning them into web pages**

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Digital inclusion

- Public access computers

- Training

- Digital eagles

- Supported digital channels

- Working with partners

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Translations

- We have a contract in place with a translation service
- Where there is a demonstrable need translate printed materials
- We have recently run some Facebook campaigns in 10 different languages – this is something we can explore for future campaigns

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Challenges

- Big organisation with lots of systems and departments

- Lots of priorities

- Single view of the customer

- Resources

- Breaking bad habits

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Importance of the voice of the customer

Customer satisfaction and key touchpoints

Mapping journeys end to end

Measuring feedback at resolution

User analytics

Utilising customer service agents as advocates of the customer

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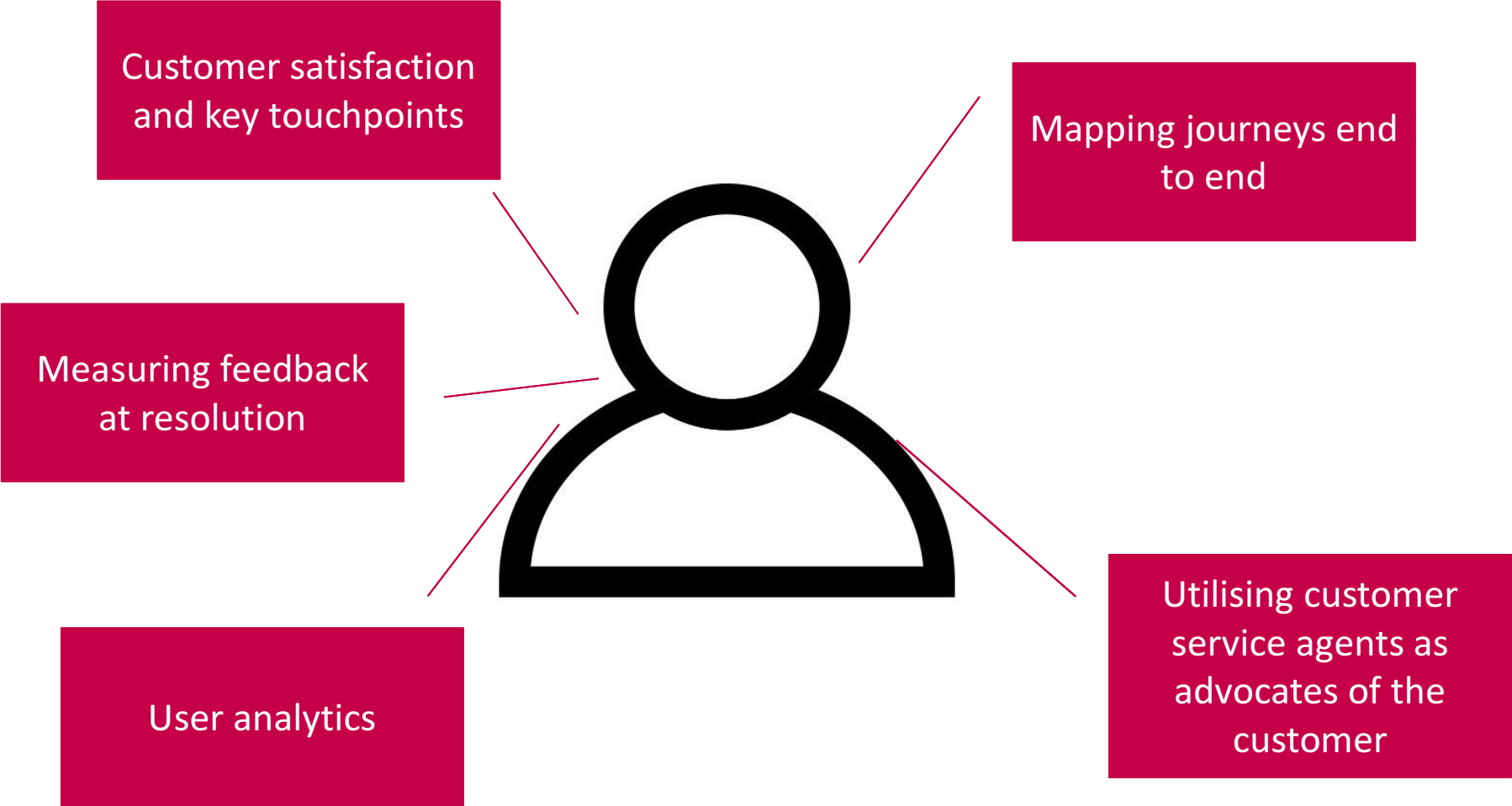
Next steps

- The recently adopted Customer Access Strategy sets the principles and ambitions for where we want to be

- We acknowledge this is a journey and requires ongoing effort to continuously improve

- We have a Customer Experience Programme which is making improvements:

  - To improve digital channels

  - Set standards and redesign services with a customer focus

  - Deliver customer service and related training to all council staff

  - Coordinate activity to support digitally excluded customers

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Questions?

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Sticks and Stones: The Language of Disability

Aim of document:

- In this publication we take a look at the empowering language we at SPECTRUM use to talk about Disability and Disabled People, and why this is important.

Prepared by:

- SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living:
  Email: info@SpectrumCIL.co.uk
  Phone: 023 8020 2625

Date: February 2018

Contents: Page:

In this publication we take a look at the language we at SPECTRUM use to talk about Disability and Disabled People[1], and why.

As the old saying goes, 'sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never harm me'. While that might be good advice to help children to deal with playground bullies, it might not be quite so much help when dealing with the kind of negative, stereotypical and sometimes oppressive language that Disabled People often have to face. Society's misconceptions about Disabled People are constantly being reinforced by disabling terms like 'cripple' and 'handicapped' - even in the 21st Century. Their continued use contributes significantly to the negative self image of Disabled People and at the same time perpetuates discriminatory attitudes and practices among the general public.

So, words can in fact do a lot of harm and - if you happen to be on the receiving end - can often be just as damaging as the proverbial 'sticks and stones'.

Sometimes, well-meaning but seriously misguided terms intended to counter this kind of overtly discriminatory language can do just as much harm, albeit in more subtle ways. For example, euphemistic terms such as 'physically challenged' and 'differently abled' have crept into our everyday language as a result of people failing to understand the difference between Medical and Social Models of Disability. While, in many ways, they are just plain daft - and often provoke a knowing shake of the head - such terms are still discriminatory because they imply that the 'problem' of Disability is still, essentially, located with people with impairments themselves. This neatly sidesteps the real reasons for the barriers we face. Yes, we are sometimes challenged physically - 10 flights of steps for a wheelchair user does indeed cause a certain degree of difficulty, even if they had three Weetabix for breakfast!! But take away the steps or put in a ramp, and the 'challenge' magically disappears.

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[1] By Disabled People we refer to people with any form of impairment who are *disabled* by society and the multiple barriers they face, 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.

Language is never neutral

All language has meaning that goes beyond being purely descriptive. It shapes how we see each other, the value we place on different identities, and how we actually behave. So, any discussion about the language we use to talk about Disability cannot be undertaken from a politically neutral standpoint.

At SPECTRUM we have always been very clear that our position is based on the Social Model of Disability, which makes a clear distinction between impairment and disability:

Impairment vs Disability

IMPAIRMENT IS ……

The functional limitation within an individual caused by a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory condition which differs from accepted 'norms'

SOCIAL MODEL DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

The disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by society which takes little or no account of people who have impairments, and thus excludes them from mainstream activity. Therefore, disability, like sexism and racism, is discrimination and social oppression

DISABLED PEOPLE .....

Are therefore those people with impairments who are disabled by society

These distinctions make a huge difference to the language we use. Stereotypical language based on a Medical Model of Disability reinforces a negative view of Disabled People while, at the same time, disguises the social and economic basis of the barriers we face:

"Over the years a large amount of terminology concerning disability has evolved which denies the social construction of disability and is now considered offensive by many people in the British Disabled People's civil rights movement. These terms have originated and been perpetuated by the likes of the medical, religious and welfare professions. Many are patriarchal in nature, evoking the notion that Disabled People need looking after. Others are based on false premises that have since been disproved.

The language that people use reflects what they think and can influence how they deal with situations. If they behave as if the problem is with the individual, they will take a different approach than if they regard the problem as being with the attitudes, systems and practices that create disabling barriers."

('The Language of Disability', by Laurence Clark and Stephen Marsh, 2002)

So, for example, subjective terms like 'afflicted', 'sufferer', 'housebound' etc reinforce a negative view of Disabled People as powerless 'victims' or objects of pity. Similarly, phrases such as 'the disabled', 'the blind', and 'the deaf' dehumanise Disabled People to the point that they become invisible as real individuals. In some cases language can make us disappear altogether. How often, for example, have you heard wheelchair users referred to as "a wheelchair". Images of autonomous robot wheelchairs getting on and off airplanes might be appropriate in a science fiction film, but as a way of describing real people it is extremely offensive!!

'Political correctness' gone mad?

A lot is said about '*Political Correctness*' which has become a phrase of ridicule for many people. However this stance trivialises an important principle – that the language we use to describe people, should be language that those it describes are comfortable with, avoiding terms that are offensive or inaccurate.

It's also important to keep in mind that offensive language is offensive for a reason; many of the various words and phrases that have been used to describe Disability have a long history and almost always carry negative connotations. Interestingly, many also deliberately seek to define people with impairments as being 'outsiders' and not fully part of society. So, the term 'idiot', for example, derives from the Greek 'idiotus'

meaning "a person who does not take part in public life." and 'cripple' has been traced back to the Medieval word 'kripple', which meant "to be without power" - which is quite insightful if you think about it!!

Dismissing concerns about such language as 'political correctness gone mad' is, at best, misguided and naive. The question is, in any case, a false one. The main issue is not whether or not this or that tem is 'correct' - which can quickly become a quite tedious debate - but whether or not the meaning it conveys is one that reinforces a positive or negative perception of Disabled People. All language describing particular groups in society is political - it cannot be anything but. So, the important questions are about whose language should be respected and which political perspectives hold sway.

Disabled People and the disabling society

While negative language describing people with impairments goes back hundreds of years, the emergence of the Disability Movement and the Social Model of Disability in the 1970s and 80s saw language itself become a fundamental political tool in our struggle for civil rights and inclusion.

According to the Social Model of Disability, people have impairments, they do not have disabilities. Disability is caused by society's inability or unwillingness to meet the needs of people with impairments. As a result, the term 'Disabled People' was redefined to mean people with impairments who are disabled by socially constructed barriers and the word 'Disabled' before 'People' or 'Person' came to signify identification with a <u>collective</u> cultural identity. Writing Disabled People with a capital 'D' and 'P' also became commonplace as a way of emphasise the term's political significance.

More recently some groups have chosen to adopt 'people-first' or 'person-first' language as a way of describing disability that involves putting the word 'person' or 'people' before the word 'disability' - as in 'people with disabilities'. The thinking behind this is to promote the idea that disability is just a label and not the defining characteristic of the individual.

But that is not a view we share because, just as with euphemistic terms like 'physically challenged', it mixes up the Medical and Social Models of Disability and confuses disability with impairment. Most importantly, it implies that the effects of disability lie with the individual, rather than society. This effectively denies the political and collective meaning of the term 'Disabled People'.

Terms preferred to describe different groups of Disabled People

People with Learning Difficulties: Usually prefer the term 'People with Learning <u>Difficulties</u>', or maybe 'People with Learning <u>Impairments</u>' to the term 'People with Learning <u>Disabilities</u>'. People have impairments, disability is what happens when society fails to recognise and meet the needs of people who have learning difficulties/impairments.

Deaf People: People with milder hearing loss may label themselves as 'hard of hearing', or 'hearing impaired'. However, people who have no usable hearing are known as Deaf and consider that their culture and language is different to other people, and therefore when referring to the Deaf culture and political identity, 'Deaf' should be capitalised. As a collective identity, 'Deaf' can be used to describe people who are Deaf, or have other hearing impairments.

Blind People: People with impaired vision will usually prefer to be referred to as Visually Impaired People. However, people who have no usable vision are Blind and consider that their cultural and political identity is different to other people, and therefore 'Blind' should be capitalised. As a collective identity, 'Blind' can be used to describe people who are Blind, or have other visual impairments.

People with Mental Health Impairments: People have mental health impairments, or conditions – they should not be referred to as having mental health problems. Many such people preferred to use the label 'Mental Health System Survivors' as a statement against the often debilitating and damaging treatments they have to endure.

Special Needs: Still widely used, often used to define children who go to 'special' schools, or describe Disabled People (Particularly those with Learning Difficulties). Disabled People are no more, or less, special than anyone else, neither are their needs. We all have needs that are unique to us; usage of the word 'special' tends to infer these people cannot exist in the mainstream, which simply is not the case.

Cancer Survivors: People who have had, or currently are being treated for cancer, will often refer to themselves as Cancer Survivors, as their cancer is usually in remission, rather than cured.

Reclaiming our language

The term 'Disabled People' has been adopted to define a collective identity for the Disability Movement in the UK. Particular groups of Disabled People have also sought to reclaim different words and

phrases as a way of asserting their own political and/or cultural identity. People with physical impairments have, for example, sometimes adopted terms like "crips", while some Mental Health System Users and Survivors have adopted the term "mads". In these cases, language is being used to reclaim and subvert words that were previously seen as derogatory and to give them a positive meaning. They are also used to express solidarity and collective pride in a shared identity in the same way, for example, that some members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities have reclaimed the term "queer".

However, such language is of course very context-dependent. While it may be okay for members of the group to use these 'reclaimed' terms, they usually still retain their original negative connotations in wider society. Once again, this underlines that the language of Disability can never be politically neutral and emphasises the importance of respecting the way that Disabled People choose to define their collective identity.

The debate around schools for Disabled People, the use of the word 'special'

SPECTRUM's policy position is that Disabled People should be educated in mainstream schools/colleges, not educated in segregated settings. We believe that segregation is never the answer, as it separates Disabled People from their non-disabled peers, and perpetuates myths that they are different and sometimes of less value – It also keeps Disabled Children away from non-disabled children, resulting in a lack of understanding and empathy. Whilst some Disabled People find such education useful, many Disabled People report being damaged by being segregated away for their non-disabled peers and siblings. For SPECTRUM, educating all people in mainstream settings (with the right level of support) helps reinforce the notion that Disabled People are the same as everyone else, and deserve the same level and quality of education at the same place as their non-disabled peers. Furthermore we feel that inclusive education helps break down barriers, fear of difference and discrimination between Disabled and non-disabled children which segregation polices often reinforce.

Whilst still in common use, we believe that terms such as 'special' schools and 'special' needs are simply not acceptable as appropriate descriptions anymore to describe schools for Disabled People or in describing the needs of Disabled People who go to them – historically such schools were anything but special.

The wheels, they keep on turning

When discussing the language of Disability, it is important to keep in mind that language in general is constantly evolving, and, accordingly, the language of Disability is an also evolving. This is an ongoing debate.

At SPECTRUM we believe it is vitally important to resist any attempts - whether deliberate or unintended - to neutralise the political meaning of the language we use to talk about Disability. We do not want to take on the role of 'thought police' or try to force people to only say what we want them to say. But, it is important to try to educate people about why language matters and to raise awareness of the ways that words influence actions and relationships. Language does not just describe our position in society, it actually helps to define it.

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