Making information accessible for people with dyslexia

Achieving access for all

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Dyslexia is a difference in the brain that causes difficulty in learning to read, write and spell. Short-term memory, mathematics, concentration, personal organisation and sequencing may be affected. It is biological in origin and often runs in families, but environmental factors may also influence. Around ten percent of people have some degree of dyslexia.

Making text accessible.

For many people reading becomes an automatic or unconscious skill. Dyslexic people read and process information differently. They have to work harder to interpret text and remember what they have read. People with dyslexia often experience discomfort when reading. Some dyslexic people focus on the spaces rather than the words. The words and text can appear to wobble or move around the page.

When you are communicating with someone you know has dyslexia it is important to ask them what their requirements are. What works for one person will not necessarily work for another. Observe the clear print and clear text guidelines in guide card six. This will go a long way towards making general information more accessible for people with dyslexia. Remember to use Arial 12 point as your minimum text size, but preferably 14 point.

Below are some way to make text accessible for dyslexic people:

- Don't use reverse text; light print on dark background;
- Use light coloured paper, preferably cream or off-white;
- Be conscious of where sentences begin on a page;
- Starting a new sentence at the end of a line makes it harder to follow;
- Write in short simple sentences, using short words where possible;
- Use active verbs as much as possible, for example "we will do it" rather than "it will be done by us";
- Give instructions clearly and avoid long sentences;
- Using boxes to highlight important text can be effective;
- Use bold not capital letters for emphasis;
- Use a heavier weight and type of paper, to reduce text glaring through from the back;
- Lists of do's and don'ts are more useful than continuous text;
- Include a contents page at the beginning;
- Provide a glossary of abbreviations and jargon.

Further information on dyslexia is available from:

- The British Dyslexia Association: **www.bdadyslexia.org.uk**;
- Croydon Dyslexia Association Helpline **08442 49 69 49**. Website **www.croydononline.org/dyslexia**.