

**Our Ref/Ein Cyf:**  
**Your Ref/Eich Cyf:**  
**Date/Dyddiad:**  
**Please ask for/Gofynnwch am:**  
**Direct line/Llinell uniongyrchol:**  
**Email/Ebost:**

**BW/NA**

8<sup>th</sup> September 2008  
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WLGA • CLILC

Ann Jones AM  
Chair, Equality of Opportunity Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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Dear Ann,

## Accessible Information Policies

Thank you for your letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008 seeking information on accessible information policies within local authorities. Over half of the authorities responded to my request for information and I summarise their responses below.

Two local authorities stated that they had an Accessible Information Policy, whilst a further three said that they were in the process of developing or updating one. One of those planning to develop an Accessible Information Policy said that it would cover:

- How to make information and events accessible
- Accessible formats such as large print
- A list of transcription providers
- Guidelines on Induction loops, Minicomms and Typetalk
- Clearprint guidelines
- Communication guidelines

All of the remaining local authorities have produced guidelines on providing accessible information that are either part of much broader corporate documents or developed for service areas. They are also made available on local authority intranet and websites for local authority staff to refer to and customers to view. Examples of these documents include:

- Access Policy
- Guidelines for Staff and Language Choice Booklet
- Inclusive Events and Accessible Information Good Practice Guide
- Consultation Best Practice Booklet
- Corporate Style Guide
- Communication Strategy and Linguistic Skills Strategy
- Corporate Diversity Policy
- Accessible Communications Guidance

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(If the inquiry would like to view a selection of these documents,

[www.wlga.gov.uk](http://www.wlga.gov.uk)

please let me know and I will be happy to forward copies to you.)

All local authorities in Wales are required under the provisions of their Disability Equality Schemes and accompanying action plans to provide accessible communications to their customers. Several local authorities in their replies stated that they offered accessible information in a range of alternative format including audiotape, large type, Braille, type talk, minicom service, British Sign Language (BSL), induction loop, easy read and language line. One local authority in its reply said that it regularly presents the printed documents it produces to meetings of their Access Group for their feedback, which is then fed back to their in house graphic design unit. As well as Disability Equality Schemes, local authorities are also required to produce Welsh Language Schemes which set out how they will implement the provision of services to the public through the medium of Welsh, including communications.

We also asked local authorities about their web accessibility. Out of the replies received all of them follow the WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) Standard. The majority are at Level 1, whilst some are aiming towards Level 2. As well as WAI local authorities have also applied guidelines from Royal National institute for the Blind (RNIB) and the Bobby Standard in their websites. Some local authorities apply automated checking of their webpages for accessibility, using online tools such SiteMorse, SiteCheck and 'Ask Cynthia,' whilst the Society of Information Technology Management SOCITM annually reviews all Welsh local authority websites independently for its 'Better Connected' report.

Other feedback received from local authorities on accessible information highlighted some examples of good practice, including:

- the introduction by a local authority of a text service known as Cyber Kate to send out information to those who have registered for the service
- the introduction by a local authority of new software Dierit Plus, which will enable customers with visual or reading difficulties to 'listen' to the website without the need to install software on their own PCs
- a commitment by a local authority in its new Customer Charter to provide its customers with straightforward information
- training delivered by several local authorities for staff on accessible information, covering responding to requests for information and British Sign Language and Welsh and in the case of one local authority being provided as part of its corporate staff induction training.

I hope the information provided will be of use to the inquiry. If you have any would like to discuss any aspect of it further, please feel free to you contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Naomi Alleyne**  
Director of Equalities and Social Justice