



ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION POLICY AND GUIDELINES

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Westward Housing Group and its member organisations are committed to communicating clearly with residents in a way that does not exclude people with disabilities or particular needs.
- 1.2 In accordance with Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) we believe that people should be able to receive information and use our services in ways that are accessible to them.
- 1.3 We recognise that certain groups or communities with which we work may require assistance in order to access the Group's services.
- 1.4 Westward Housing Group and its member organisations will do all they can to provide information in alternative formats on request, on audio tape, in Braille, in large print and translations into other languages. In addition to this Westward will provide an interpreter to facilitate communication between any Association and its residents with visual and hearing impairments, as well as residents whose first language is not English.
- 1.5 This Accessible Information Policy aims to:
 - ◆ Promote equality of opportunity for all residents.
 - ◆ State the underlying principles and responsibilities involved in translation and interpretation.
 - ◆ Specify a framework and guidelines so that there is a Group-wide understanding and consistency in our approach to communicating with residents and other stakeholders.
 - ◆ Establish systems for monitoring the use of translation and interpretation services.
 - ◆ Ensure that the necessary budget and financial systems are in place for providing translation and interpretation services.

2. Equal Opportunities

- 2.1 This policy demonstrates Westward Housing Group's commitment to Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) which came into force in October 1999, which states:

'It is unlawful for a provider of services to discriminate against a disabled person in refusing to provide, or deliberately not providing, to the disabled person any services which he provides, or is prepared to provide, to members of the public.'

The following are examples of services to which this section applies:

- ◆ *access to and means of communication*
- ◆ *access to and use of information services'*

(Extract from Part III of the DDA 1995, HMSO)

- 2.2 The policy also supports the Group's commitment to providing equal opportunities for all residents. This means providing equal access to all its services. We recognise the need to set up appropriate systems to actively prevent discrimination both directly and indirectly on the basis of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, gender, sexuality, marital status, age, religion, physical disability or mental health. (For further information please refer to The Group's Equality and Diversity Policies.)

3. Interpretation and Translation Guidelines

- 3.1 Definitions:

Interpretation 'Interpreting is a process where one person acts as a go between to enable two parties to communicate.'

Translation 'Translation is similar to transcription. It gives people access to written information in a way that is different to standard English print i.e. in another language.'

- 3.2 English is not the first language for some of our residents so we need to be able to translate and interpret information in minority ethnic languages on request.
- 3.3 We must also make sure we can provide interpreters and large print, Braille and audio tape versions of documents when requested.
- 3.4 We subscribe to 'Language Line', a 24-hour telephone interpreting service, enabling all staff to get immediate help from qualified interpreters in more than 400 different languages, whenever needed. This means that residents facing difficulties in speaking or understanding English will have equal access to information.

- 3.5 Guidelines for using the Language Line service are available at Appendix A.
- 3.6 Although Language Line is an excellent interpretation service, translation work can often be expensive. Therefore we recommend the use of local translation agencies to undertake translation work into alternative formats. In addition to this if a British Sign Language interpreter is required to assist a resident, a local interpreter should also be used. A list of local translation and interpretation agencies with addresses and contact phone numbers can be found at Appendix B.
- 3.7 Clear design makes documents easier to read for most people. Putting that extra thought into the detail of the document can often make all the difference to people with disabilities and people whose first language is not English. When writing letters or producing other documents Westward Housing Group staff will use the guidelines for printed materials (see Appendix C), to make information more accessible for all residents.
- 3.8 Staff of Westward Housing Group and its subsidiaries will try to ensure that customers are supported in reading and understanding materials provided and staff will take the time to establish and aid understanding where there may be issues with literacy or learning difficulties.

4. Implementation

- 4.1 The Group and its subsidiaries will effectively communicate this policy to all staff.
- 4.2 Each Director and Manager will ensure all their staff understand this policy and are helped to put it into practice at work. A short Language Line training video is available from the Communications Manager.
- 4.3 Staff must ensure they know how to use translation and interpretation services. Language Line Identification Cards must be carried by all staff who work regularly with residents (see 5.2).

5. Keeping Service Users Informed

- 5.1 We must let residents know that a translation and interpretation service is available to them. Unfortunately, many people have low expectations of getting information or communicating in a way they can understand so they don't ask for it. We must ensure we don't misinterpret this as a lack of demand.
- 5.2 In order to keep residents informed and raise awareness of the availability of this service the Group should:

- ◆ Ensure every print publication we produce has a clear large print statement in a prominent place about the availability of alternative formats.
- ◆ Regularly publicise the service in *Coast to Coast* and *Tarka Times* (residents' newsletters) and at every available opportunity considered to be appropriate.
- ◆ Ensure Reception areas at all offices have a Language Line identification poster in a key position. This enables residents to point to and identify their own language quickly and effectively.
- ◆ Ensure front-line staff i.e. Housing Officers, Maintenance Officers and Housing Support Workers always carry a Language Line Identification Card showing messages in the 28 most commonly spoken languages to enable them to encourage residents to point to and identify their own language quickly and effectively (see 4.3).

6. Payment

- 6.1 There is a budget within the Communications budget set aside for the annual subscription to Language Line in order to make a translation and interpretation service readily available.
- 6.2 However, the payment for **ALL** translation and interpretation work is the responsibility of the requesting team / project, even if the order is placed through the Communications Manager. When arranging translation or interpretation work staff must remember to quote the unique team / project number (See Appendix A).

7. Monitoring

We monitor the demand for the translation and interpretation service in order to build up an accurate idea of the communication needs of our residents. We will keep records of the total amount spent by the Group on this service.

- 7.1 The translation and interpretation monitoring form (See Appendix D) is used to collate information regarding the take up of translation and interpretation services. A form shall always be completed for every translation or interpretation request and subsequently updated to indicate the total cost of each request. Each monitoring form should then be sent to the Communications Manager.
- 7.2 An IBS module is in development in early 2007 so that we can to better profile our accessible information requirements along with diversity information. This can then be shared with our contractors where appropriate in order to provide better service to our customers which has been tailored to their individual requirements.

8 Help and Advice

- 8.1 Staff requiring guidance on producing documents in other languages or formats, or how to arrange an interpreter, should contact the Communications Manager on 01803 217500 for help and advice. You can also fax on 01803 214657. Or email vanessa.gray@westcountryha.org.uk Or you can write to:

Communications Manager
Westward Housing Group
Hatfield House
Hatfield Road
Torquay
TQ1 3HF

9 Policy Review

- 9.1 This Policy and its implementation shall be reviewed annually by the Communications Manager using the relevant monitoring data. Any proposed changes to the policy shall be put before the Board, and staff and residents will then be informed of changes.

Vanessa Gray
Communications Manager

APPENDIX A

10. LANGUAGE LINE GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

- 10.1 Use the Language Line Identification poster (located in all reception areas and offices and on the intranet) or your Language Line Identification Card to help you identify the language you require. Please contact the Communications Manager if you require assistance.
- 10.2 The three main services Language Line provides are as follows:
- ◆ Text to Speech – over the phone translation of short documents (e.g. letters, birth/marriage certificates), where written translation is not required in most languages.
 - ◆ Text Translation – document translation covering over 100 languages and a wide range of document types.
 - ◆ Telephone Interpreting – professional interpreters available, from any phone, in most languages.

10.3 Booking an Interpreter

Using Language Line is easy – there are 3 simple steps. You need no special equipment – only a telephone.

- ◆ Call 0845 310 9900 and quote your team / project unique ID number, these are currently:

Team / Project	ID No	Team / Project	ID No
Housing Management (West)	L28207	Truro Young Women's Centre	L28215
Maintenance	L28208	Plymouth House	L28216
Central Services	L28209	Plymouth Mother and Baby	L28217
Development	L28210	Leighon Road	L28218
Housing Management (East)	L28211	Steepway	L28219
Housing Management (South)	L28212	Greenbank Flats	L28220
Housing Management (Rent)	L28213	Alexandra House	L28221
Maple Road	L28214	Bethany House	L28222
Mortimer House	L28223	Coverdale House	L35134
49/50 Magdalen Road	L28224	Conway House	L35135

Redcliffe House	L28225	Floating Support	L35136
Luscombe Terrace	L28226	Lord's Place	L35137
Cotfield Street	L28227	Powderham Road	L35138
Hill Park Crescent	L28228	Dale Road	L35139
Redworth Terrace	L28229	1-2 Springhill	L35140
Magdalene Road	L28230	Participation and Communities	L35141
Monks Road	L28231	Onward House	L35142
Tarka Housing – Housing Services	L49965	Tarka Housing – Repairs	L49966
Tarka Housing – Central Services	L49967	Westward Housing Group	L49968

Please note that if you do not give the correct code, your request will be denied.

The operator will ask you for your name and the organisation and telephone number you are calling from. The staff member needs to tell the operator which language is required then stay on the line while an interpreter is connected (this should only take a few seconds).

- ◆ Introduce yourself to the interpreter and brief him/her about the situation.
- ◆ Start your conversation.

During the interview remember to:

- ◆ Speak in Plain English and avoid jargon.
- ◆ Speak directly to the individual who needs an interpreter.
- ◆ Make sure only one person speaks at a time and don't shout.
- ◆ Speak clearly and remember occasional gestures can be helpful.

10.4 Translation of Documents

- ◆ Identify the format and language in which the translation is required.
- ◆ Contact the Communications Manager prior to seeking a document translation to check whether or not a copy of the translation required is already in stock.
- ◆ If the translation you require is not already held in stock, contact Language Line (see booking an interpreter) on 08453109900 and quote your team / project number or a local translation service.

- ◆ Explain what translation is required and agree dates by which you need the translated material, copy to Communications Manager.
- ◆ On receipt of the translation please ensure a copy of the document is made and sent to the Communications Manager who will be responsible for maintaining a central library of translated documents.

10.5 Other Translation and Interpretation Agencies

Local translation agencies should be used to undertake translation work into alternative formats, we currently use the Royal National Institute for the Blind Transcription Centre South West, based in Ivybridge, Devon. Please relay your request via the Communications Manager.

If you require a British Sign Language interpreter, a local interpreter should also be used. A list of local translation and interpretation agencies with addresses and contact phone numbers can be found in Appendix B.

11 TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION AGENCIES**Contact Details****Service****Language Line**

11-21 Northdown Street
London N1 9BN
Tel: 020 7520 1430
Fax: 020 7520 1450
Email: translations@languageline.co.uk

Translation and
Interpretation into
over 400 different
languages
(including Braille and
British Sign Language)

**Royal National Institute for the Blind
Transcription Centre**

2 White Oaks Court
Davids Lane
Ivybridge PL21 0DW
Tel: 01752 690092
Fax: 01752 698329
Email: ivytcsw@rnib.org.uk

Produce transcriptions into
Braille, large print and
audiotape.

Association of Sign Language Interpreters

www.asli.org.uk

The page with South West interpreters on it is at this link:
<http://www.asli.org.uk/directory/directorySearch/results.asp?region=SW&workDomain=999&additionalSkills=999&memberType=999&submitButtonName=search>

Approved sign language
interpreters

Royal National Institute for Deaf People

13B Church Farm Business Park
Corston
Tel: 0800 622401 or 01225 873590
Fax: 01225 874246
Email: sw-csu@rnid.org.uk

Registered British Sign
Language Interpreters,
lipspeaking, notetaking,
communication for Deaf
people

12 GUIDELINES FOR PRINTED MATERIAL

- 12.1 Please use the following guidance to help ensure that the documents produced by the Group and its subsidiaries are as consistent accessible as possible to all service users.

12.2 Availability of other formats

All Group and member associations' publications (not all stationery) should include information about the availability of other formats, such as:

'If you or someone you know, would like [name of document] on audio tape, in large print, in Braille, or translated into another language, please contact our Communications Manager on 01803 200300, fax 01803 214657 or email vanessa.gray@westcountryha.org.uk.'

This should always be in Gills Sans font and 14 point size (as above) where possible, 12 point as a minimum where necessary.

Wherever you include a phone number, remember to include a minicom, fax number and email address where possible too.

12.3 Print Size and Type-face

- ◆ A minimum of 12 point print size should be used, 14 point is the ideal size. This is size 12.
- ◆ The approved corporate font is Gills Sans, if this is not available use a plain type-face like Arial, Gill Sans or Helvetica. These make the text clear and legible with well defined edges. A standard house font will be introduced for all documents in due course.

GOOD

Arial
Helvetica

BAD

Times New Roman
Courier

- ◆ Avoid capital letters as they are generally harder to read.

GOOD

Don't use capitals for whole words or sentences

BAD

DON'T USE CAPITALS FOR WHOLE WORDS OR SENTENCES

- ◆ Use medium weight type-faces and avoid italics for the body of the text, use them sparingly and for emphasis.

GOOD

Medium weight

BAD

Bold weight
Italics

12.4 Layout

- ◆ Avoid justified text. Instead align text to the left margin as it makes it easy to find the start and finish of each line and keeps the spaces even between words.
- ◆ Lines should be no longer than 60-70 characters. You should also avoid making sentences and paragraphs too long or too short.
- ◆ Headings should stand out by using **bold** or reverse print.

Reverse print is white print on a dark background

- ◆ Leave one line of space between paragraphs to give the eye a break and make reading easier.
- ◆ Use navigational aids such as headings and page numbers to make things easier to find. Always place them in the same position on each page.
- ◆ If part of the document has to be filled in by the reader, plenty of writing space must be given.

12.5 Printing

- ◆ Avoid using glossy paper because glare makes it difficult to read.
- ◆ Use good quality paper which will not show text through the reverse.
- ◆ Avoid setting text over images, for example photographs. This makes text very difficult to read.
- ◆ When you use more than one colour make sure the contrast between them is good.

13 TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION MONITORING FORM

Please complete and return this translation and interpretation monitoring form to the Communications Manager each time a translation or interpretation service (including the production of documents in alternative formats such as Braille, Large Print, or Audio tape) is used by the Association.

Date: _____

Name of person assisted: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Request: _____

Language / format required: _____

Service contacted:
(Name and Address) _____

Date service received: _____

Requesting officer: _____

Requesting department: _____

Total cost: _____

Comments: _____

