

Inclusive Information



Use Guide 6 for advice on how to ensure the information you provide is inclusive and accessible to everyone who wants to use your services.

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The Portfolio is published as a result of collaboration with a working party, which includes specialist consultants, and aims to support the elimination of discrimination in service provision. The views expressed in these guides are not necessarily those of Resource.

© Resource 2003 Registered Charity No. 1079666 ISBN 1-903743-19-2 Designed by Satpaul Bhamra

A CIP catalogue record of this publication is available from the British Library.

Front cover: Large print is one way to provide a more inclusive level of information. © RNIB

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The culture of social inclusion recognises that disabled people can contribute on all levels: by saying what they want from services; working for organisations; and swelling visitor numbers. © Metropolitan Museum of Art

Introduction

Information is an empowering tool. Many of us take information so much for granted that we only realise its power when access is obscured: our PC stops working; our newspaper does not appear on the door mat in the morning; or we find ourselves in an airport surrounded by signs in an unknown language.

For many disabled people, however, information is not readily available. The *Survey of Provision for Disabled Users of Museums*, *Archives and Libraries* (commissioned by Resource 2001) shows that 20 per cent of museums, archives and libraries provide information in large print and 21 per cent have access information specifically for disabled people. Six per cent have produced an access guide designed for people with learning difficulties. The MGC Domus Survey (1998) revealed that only four per cent of museums held events in British Sign Language – now recognised by government as a minority language.

Disabled people often cite lack of accessible information as the main reason why they could not plan a visit, or enjoy an experience as much as they had hoped. Frequently only a small part of the information produced by an organisation is made available in ways that are accessible to disabled people.

There is growing awareness of how much can be done to make essential information accessible to disabled people, and also how to present exhibitions and develop collections in ways that are inclusive of disabled people.

This Guide suggests practical ways to overcome barriers to information for disabled people. It also promotes a holistic outlook, in which everyone's information needs are met.

1 Managing access to information

Making information accessible to disabled people requires an ongoing commitment as there are still many gaps to be filled. There are improvements which are very easy to make and can be introduced quickly; others require more resources, information gathering and planning. In busy working environments such as publishing and marketing, the information needs of disabled people are easily overlooked. An oversight by just one person involved – the writer, the copy editor, the designer, the printer, the marketing officer – is enough to create unnecessary barriers of access to information. An accessible information policy and plan is the most useful way for any organisation to make sure that access to information stays on the agenda and that real improvements happen.

Accessible information policy

An accessible information policy for disabled people could form part of the Access Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy or a wider Accessible Information Policy that includes community languages.

An Accessible Information Policy will have aims, for example, to ensure that users can easily:

- obtain information;
- understand it;
- reach it physically;
- obtain it in their preferred way or format.

and could include:

- an aim to remove barriers to information for disabled people wherever possible;
- a commitment to meeting legal duties (see page 8);
- examples of how information can be made accessible;

- a reference to any policy which has anything to do with information, for example – customer care, house-style, exhibitions, stock acquisition, lending and inter-lending, websites and budgeting;
- some basic standards, e.g. to provide large print on request or to train all new staff how to communicate with people who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- a commitment to communicate it to all staff and the public.

Accessible information plan

An accessible information plan will list the actions which an organisation will undertake to put the policy into practice. It could be written to implement the recommendations of an access audit or review of house-style and include:

- key dates for implementing recommendations;
- key dates by which to find out vital planning information, e.g. who transcribes information into accessible formats; who provides communication support or advises on access technology locally; how much advance notice is required to book a local sign language interpreter; the time it takes to get information produced in audio; what are the costs, the likely quantities required, and the benefits to the user;
- names of the lead person and senior manager who champions the plan;
- a review date.

Equally important is that the information gained is being filed and up-dated as new useful information is being gathered. When the provision of accessible information becomes routine, it is a sure sign that an organisation is taking an inclusive approach to information.

Access to information and the law

The many ways in which information can be made accessible to disabled people are all examples of what the Disability Discrimination Act calls "auxiliary aids and services". The DDA places a duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments and to provide auxiliary aids which make services more accessible to disabled people (see Guide 5). Many of the examples of auxiliary aids included in the DDA Codes of Practice are about access to information and they highlight how vital access to information is in the daily lives of disabled people.

E-Government policies stress that public service websites must be accessible to disabled people by 2005 and meet web-accessibility standards level 2 (AA) (see Guide 7).

2 Sensory access to information

D/deaf and hard of hearing people

There are about eight million people with some degree of hearing loss in the UK, or one in seven of the population. Many of them use hearing aids. About 50,000–70,000 people use British Sign Language (BSL) as a first language. Many are bilingual in BSL and English. They may have been born deaf, have lost some or all of their hearing before they began to speak, or have become deafened later in life.

According to the Royal National Institute for Deaf People, 68 per cent of deaf people feel isolated because of their deafness and 75 per cent have problems coping with shops, banks, public places and transport.

Deaf people and many hard of hearing people find it difficult – if not impossible to understand speech on its own, whether face to face or on the phone. Someone using a hearing aid, often supported by lip reading to follow speech, may still experience barriers to communication, such as:

- background noise;
- visual interference;
- not enough volume;
- poor clarity of speech.

Deaf and hard of hearing people work extra hard to receive what is being said, and this makes communication more stressful.

Unless there is communication support or BSL interpretation, most deaf people are likely to face barriers to information:

- at a reception or enquiry desk;
- in a conference setting;
- on a guided tour;
- in a meeting;
- on a videotape.

BSL users (who may see themselves as a linguistic minority and use a capital D for deaf – see Guide 2) may also find complex written English hard to deal with.

Some ways of overcoming barriers

Clear communication face to face

It's a good idea to find out first how the deaf person wants to communicate, as this will avoid confusion. You need to attract their attention first and make sure they are able to see your face clearly. Many deaf people will be able to follow you if you speak in the usual way, perhaps more slowly and clearly if necessary but not in an exaggerated way. You may need to use pen and paper (see Guide 2).

Environment

It will be much easier for deaf and hard of hearing people to follow speech and to hear audio information and announcements, if you plan your environment to include:

- good lighting;
- good acoustics;
- reduced background noise;
- induction loops.

Induction loop

An induction loop makes it easier for hard-of-hearing people to use hearing aids in enclosed spaces (see Guide 6).

Written information

Clear print information about your services, exhibits, collections and events should always be made available.

Other formats

Organisations such as the British Deaf Association will transcribe information into signed video format or on to signed CD-ROM for you. Some organisations have produced their own subtitled and/or signed videotapes about their services (e.g. Warwickshire Libraries) and collections (e.g. Colchester Museums).

Communication aids

You can make it easier for deaf and hard of hearing people to make contact with you if you have:

- Amplified telephones with inductive couplers.
- Fax and email (with the numbers on your publicity material).
- A subscription to Typetalk, the relay telephone system linking text and voice phone users. Contact RNID or British Telecom for details.
- A textphone.

Communication support

When you provide communication support at meetings or events, you can do so in a number of ways.

For deaf people whose first language is English:

- Lip speakers
- Note-takers
- Palantype or Speedtext, produced by an operator using a keyboard to reproduce the spoken word on a screen.

For BSL and Sign Supported English (SSE) users:

- Communication support workers
- Interpreters

Contact the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) the RNID or the Council for Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CADCP) for more information.

You can book communication support from a freelance worker, local or national agency such as the RNID's Communication Service Unit. Most support will cost between £30–£100 and bookings usually need to be for a minimum of two hours. If it is longer than two hours or the information is complex, two co-workers will be needed. Communication support workers are in short supply and it is a good idea to book them as soon as you know you will need them – at least a few weeks ahead of the event.

Events

Employing Deaf people who can provide, for example, signed story times, lectures or workshops is an effective, direct and positive way to increase access to events. Some museums, for example the Tate Modern, have introduced guided tours provided by Deaf BSL users.

Blind and partially sighted people

Some two million people in the United Kingdom have sight impairments. The large majority have some sight and use it in everyday life. Most blind and partially sighted people face a number of barriers to information.

Information in small print is often hard to read for anyone. Some fonts are very difficult for visually impaired people, for example, those which are:

- Serifs (such as Times).
- Italic (such as Chancery).
- Ornate (such as Curlz).
- Narrow or condensed (such as Helvetica Narrow).

Other barriers include:

- Little contrast between background and letters.
- Glossy paper, which is reflective.
- Paper which is thin, as words on the other side will show through.
- Text super-imposed over pictures.
- Uneven lighting for reading.
- Reflections in glass of display cabinets. (see pages 14–15 for examples)

Examples of inadvisable practice



Text super-imposed over pictures

disabling

Little contrast between background and letters



Paper which is very thin and printed on both sides, as words on the other side will show through



Glossy paper, which is reflective

Examples of inadvisable fonts

Serif fonts can be difficult to read

Italic fonts can be difficult to read

Narrow fonts can be difficult to read

Ornate fonts can be difficult to read

Examples of advisable 'Sans Serif' (mono-line) fonts

Clear print (12 point)

Large print (14 point and over)

Displays and signs (30 pt)

Without oral information or information in braille or Moon – an embossed and simplified alphabet – blind people have no way finding out about a service or collections.

Some ways of overcoming barriers

Environment

Well-lit, uncluttered, clear and logically laid out environments, with colour or tone contrast, make it much easier for visually impaired people to move independently to a particular shelf or exhibit. Clear signage, including tactile and audio signs are important (see Guide 9).

Providing information face to face

Staff could help visually impaired people with reading the titles of audio books, or lists of titles, give visitor information and a guided tour – for example describing the premises and exhibits and provide help with the use of equipment (see also Guide 2).

Printed information

Two out of three visually impaired people can read large print (starting at 14 point font size). Producing information in large print is easy and cheap. Leaflets with short and snappy information can usually accommodate 14 or 16 point font size. Titles can be even bigger and bolder.

When it is not possible to use large print for all, RNIB advises that a minimum size font of 12 point should be used and 'Clear print' guidelines be applied, as this make text easy to read – this Guide follows RNIB's guidelines. Information should also be provided in

large print. All computers now offer a wide range of print sizes, so individual preferences can easily be met.

If the information is on panels, boards or labels, the viewing distance is greater and large print is even more important. Many museums, archives and libraries use 30 point or larger for print on panels and boards for all visitors, which is good practice.

Braille and Moon

There are around 18,000 braille readers in the UK and some 1,500 who read Moon. RNIB provides information about braille and Moon transcription services (see Further information). They can hold electronic copies of braille-formatted text and print it out on request. This avoids the need to stock braille documents, which are easily squashed. Most often, a few braille copies are enough to start with.

Audio

Visually impaired people who do not read large print, braille or Moon often rely on audio information. You can record short documents onto audio tape if you have a tape recorder or a member of staff is willing to use theirs. Speak clearly, read out the table of contents at the beginning and read out page numbers.

The Confederation of Talking Information Services (COTIS) provides more detailed advice, which is very useful if you are likely to make recordings frequently (see Further information).

There are a number of audio transcription agencies (see Further information). The quality of the voices and the recordings vary as do prices and delivery schedules. Some are free of charge. Many local societies for visually impaired people have recording equipment.

For simple information, a voice of professional quality is not essential, but it is very important that the voice should not be dull to listen to. Ask for sample recordings and information about quality standards.

Assistive equipment

See Guide 7 for information on assistive equipment such as computer speech software, scanners with braille output and Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTVs).

Events

Touch tours and description of objects or slides are ways of giving visually impaired people information about your exhibitions, displays and lectures (see *Talking Images Guide*, RNIB, in Further information).

Deafblind people

Many people with both sight and hearing loss will use one or more of the ways covered in the previous two sections to access information. More advice and guidance is available from Deafblind UK (DBUK), Sense or the RNIB (see Further information). Deafblind people (sometimes called people with dual sensory loss) have very varied needs, so it is always best to ask how an individual prefers to communicate. Deafblind people may be:

- Hearing aid users and read large print.
- Braille readers and use the deafblind alphabet.
- BSL users and use access software.
- Lip readers and read standard size print with a magnifier.

Some ways of overcoming barriers

Environment and events

You can help by providing hand rails, tactile maps and signage. You could use different textures (some places use different smells) to indicate changes of area. Creative use of touch, smell and taste will enhance access to displays and events. Touch may also mean using vibration, movement or air currents.

Face to face communication

If you speak clearly to the person, and have a black felt tip pen and paper handy, this will often be enough. Some people may use the deafblind manual alphabet and may have their own interpreter with them. A method everyone can use is the block alphabet, which uses large capital letters 'written' with the finger on the deafblind person's hand. However, the deafblind manual alphabet allows for quicker communication (if the deafblind person is using speech to respond) and can be learnt in as little as an hour.

Communication and guiding support

Most deafblind people need help from other people to gain access to information and activities (see Guide 2).

Communication aids and equipment

A growing amount of technology is available to deafblind people to match their individual requirements. For more information contact DBUK's specialist IT Centre.

3 Access for all

Physical access to information

The role of the physical environment in access to information is often overlooked. Short people, wheelchair users or those with any degree of mobility difficulty may face barriers getting to the place where the information is.

Material that is stored on high or low shelves, or in difficult to access storage areas, is inaccessible for some people. Large volumes may be difficult for some people to lift up or down.

Some people may not be able to visit your building, so they cannot see your exhibits, make use of your reference library or archived materials, or choose from your range of materials for borrowing.

Some ways of overcoming barriers

- If you have very tall rows of shelves, only use the ones in the middle.
- Keep your aisles uncluttered.
- Have plenty of space between shelves, displays and furniture.
- Provide a range of chairs and tables nearby.
- Offer staff help to retrieve heavy or awkward-to-handle items.
- Provide alternative formats such as computer disk, audiotape, website.
- The postal service, home delivery, online access, mobile libraries and loan boxes can help give access to people who cannot visit your building.

Writing and presenting inclusive information

Long and complex words and sentences, and words without illustrations tend to create barriers for most people. English language idioms can be a barrier for people to whom English is a second language. Intellectual barriers are created by the use of jargon and acronyms.

If we write in the way we usually speak, our written information is much more easily understood. It helps to:

- Write in plain English.
- Use short sentences and familiar words.
- Be precise and to the point.
- Use personal pronouns and phrases that create a welcoming feel.
- Explain the basic outline of the information before you start.
- Address the reader directly, as if you were speaking to them.
- Use a clear structure.
- Use an index and page numbers.
- Spell out acronyms when you first use them.

The Microsoft Word programme can display information about the level of reading accessibility of the document. This can be a helpful tool for writing clear information.

Presentation can make a huge difference to how accessible it is.

- Break up blocks of print with bullet points, symbols and illustrations.
- Use upper and lower case grammatically, rather than as design features.
- Limit lines to 60 or 70 characters.

- Leave clear gaps between lines and paragraphs and enough space between each word.
- Avoid hyphenating words that are not usually split to fill up line ends, for example 'opera -tion'.
- Keep lines left justified with a ragged right edge
- Be conscious of where sentences begin on the page. Starting a new sentence at the end of a line makes it harder to follow.
- Use bold rather than italic to highlight.

You can get more guidance on clear writing style from guidance in section 2 (see pages 13–15), and the Campaign for Plain English (see Further information).

Your website

Use standard web-accessibility guidelines (see Guide 7).

People with learning difficulties

The information-needs of people with learning difficulties vary. Writing in the way suggested earlier will be helpful. People with learning difficulties themselves and those who work with them, including advocates, parents and teachers, will be able to give you more specific guidance, to enable you to meet individual requirements. Guidelines on writing for people with learning difficulties are available from Mencap.

The organisation 'Change' also produces advice on producing information for people who have both learning difficulties and sensory impairments. This includes the use of plain English, symbols and pictures (see Further information).

Symbols

There are several graphic symbol systems in use. Examples are Blissymbols and Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) Rebus.

There are also specific symbol-based computer programmes designed to be used by people with complex communication and/or learning difficulties.

If your users, enablers and teachers use symbol systems they will tell you which systems they use. They will often produce materials themselves or in collaboration with others, including your service. There are courses for learning how to communicate with symbols and signs. You can find out more about using symbols from Communication Matters (see Further information).

People with dyslexia

For many people, reading becomes an automatic skill that requires little conscious effort. Some dyslexic readers, like anyone with a history of reading difficulties, may have to concentrate harder to interpret text and to remember what they have read. The suggestions presented in this chapter will help make text easier to read for people with dyslexia.

Some people with dyslexia will prefer to have information on audio tape or large print (see section 2).

The British Dyslexia Association has produced a useful guide to accessible writing (see Further information).

4 Publicising and marketing your services

Inclusive publicity

Include on all your publicity materials:

- your telephone and fax number;
- email and website addresses;
- textphone number;
- brief information on disability access using standard access symbols (see Further information).

Access guides

An access guide with objective information about the access you provide will enable disabled people to make their own choices.

Your reception, front of house and information services staff should all have copies of the access guide and it should be available on your website.

Marketing

Publicity

As part of your accessible information plan, you could invite all the people on your mailing lists to let you know their preferred formats and offer to provide alternative formats on request.

Radio, television (you could use the teletext pages aimed at deaf people and the radio programmes aimed at visually impaired people), audiotape, local talking newspapers, subtitled/signed videos are all ways you could use to publicise your services to disabled people.

Event planning

Publicity for events should include access information. If you use booking forms, ask about specific access requirements, so provisions can be made in advance of the event

Community links

It really helps if you make the first move to tell disabled people and community organisations what you do and how it is accessible to them.

If you make links with local disability and deaf groups, clubs and organisations, this will give you more places to advertise your services. You may find it useful to ask them face to face how they like information to be made accessible.

The publication *Marketing and Disabled Audiences: A Guide for the Arts* gives more in depth guidance on marketing (see Further information).

Useful information to include in your access guide

- General description of building(s) and services.
- Information about access in different parts of the building.
- Travel and parking information.
- Events information.
- What assistance you provide and whether advance notice is required.
- What alternative formats you have and which others can be provided.
- What home delivery, postal or other outreach services you provide.
- Details about services and events specifically targeted at disabled people.
- Contact and location details of different departments and branches, including telephone, mobile, textphone and fax numbers and email addresses and of your central information point.

For an example of an access guide, take a look at the www.goodgalleryguide.com website.

Conclusion

This guide has shown just how vital access to information is for independence and dignity. It gives many examples of basic improvements that can make a big difference to disabled people's experience of museums, archives and libraries. Many of them are not expensive.

Not all improvements can be made at once. They are incremental and perhaps the best way to make sure they happen is by developing an accessible information plan and policy. To be successful, a knowledge of users is essential, as is their involvement.

New ways of making information accessible for disabled people are constantly evolving. These include the description of museums and archive collections for visually impaired visitors, symbol systems for people with learning difficulties, videos and web resources in British Sign Language. Libraries are starting to include the needs of users with dyslexia in their planning and the way they display and promote their collections.

Many of the improvements suggested in this guide will benefit all users. They will contribute to making museums, archives and libraries more inclusive places to be, and open up the wealth of their collections to many more people. We hope that it will help you to make your services accessible to all.

Further information

D/deaf and hard of hearing people

Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) PO Box 32152 London N4 2YZ Tel: 020 8809 4353 Fax: 020 8800 3489 Textphone: 020 8800 4353 Email: chair@asli.org.uk www.asli.org.uk

British Deaf Association (BDA)

London Deaf Access Project 1–3 Worship Street London EC2A 2AB Tel: 020 7588 3520 Fax: 020 7588 3527 Textphone: 020 7588 3529 Videophone: 020 7496 9539 Email: helpline@bda.org.uk www.bda.org.uk

Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)

19–23 Featherstone Street London EC1Y 8SL Tel: 0808 808 0123 Fax: 020 7296 8199 Textphone: 0808 808 9000 Email: informationline@rnid.org.uk www.rnid.org.uk

Blind and partially sighted people

COTIS (Confederation of Tape Information Services) Guidelines on producing information on tape, including Basic Principles, Reading Skills and General Presentation.

Project Office 67 High Street Tarporley Cheshire CW6 ODP Tel: 01733 370777 Fax: 01733 371555 Voice answerphone: 01829 733351

National Library for the Blind

Far Cromwell Road Bredbury Stockport SK6 2SG Tel: 0161 355 2000 Fax: 0161 355 2098 Minicom: 0161 355 2043 Email: enquiries@nlbuk.org www.nlbuk.org

Reveal: The national database of books and reading materials in accessible formats www.revealweb.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Blind

Hold list of producers of alternative formats. RNIB has produced *See it Right*, a series of twelve booklets with comprehensive information on how to provide access to information for blind and partially sighted people. Customer Services PO Box 173 Peterborough PE2 6WS Tel: 0845 702 3153 Fax: 01733 375001 Textphone: 0845 758 5691 Email: cservices@rnib.org.uk

www.rnib.org.uk

Share the Vision c/o National Library for the Blind

Published Library Services for Visually Impaired People: a manual of best practice. Email: sharethevision@nlbuk.org bpm.nlb-online.org

TNAUK (Talking Newspapers Association, United Kingdom)

Holds directory of local talking newspapers. National Recording Centre Heathfield East Sussex TN21 8DB Tel: 01435 866102 Email: info@tnauk.org.uk www.tnauk.org.uk

UKOLN 2000 www.ukoln.ac.uk

Deafblind people

Deafblind UK

National Centre for Deafblindness John and Lucille Van Geest Place Cygnet Road Hampton Peterborough PE7 8FD Tel: 01733 358100 Fax: 01733 358356 Quertyphone: 01733 358858 (text and voice) Email: info@deafblind.org.uk www.deafblind.org.uk

Sense

11–13 Clifton Terrace Finsbury Park London N4 3SR Tel: 020 7272 7774 Fax: 020 7272 6012 Minicom: 020 7272 9648 Email: enquiries@sense.org.uk www.sense.org.uk

Intellectual access to information

Basic Skills Agency

Is particularly concerned with developing literacy skills and making language accessible to people whose literacy level is low. Produces leaflets such as *Making Reading Easier*. Commonwealth House 1–19 New Oxford Street London WC1A 1NU United Kingdom Tel: 020 7405 4017 Fax: 020 7440 6626 Email: enquiries@basic-skills.co.uk www.basic-skills.co.uk

British Council of Disabled People (BCODP)

Transcription service which includes Braille, easy words and pictures, large print, videos with British Sign Language and subtitles, CD-ROM with voice over. Tel: 01332 295551 Minicom: 01332 295581 Email: services@bcodp.org.uk www.bcodp.org.uk

British Dyslexia Association

98 London Road Reading RG1 5AU Tel: 0118 966 2677 Fax: 0118 935 1927 Email: admin@bda-dyslexia.demon.co.uk. www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk

Communication Matters

C/O Ace Center 92 Windmill Road Oxford OX3 7DR Tel/Fax: 0845 456 8211 Email: admin@communicationmatters.org.uk www.communicationmatters.org.uk

Informability Unit

The unit offers consultancy in accessible information provision and has produced the Informability Manual: making information more accessible in the light of the Disability Discrimination Act. Central Office of Information Hercules Road London SE1 7DU Tel: 020 7261 8336 Email: wendy.gregory@coi.gsi.gov.uk

Plain English Campaign

PO Box 3 New Mills High Peak SK22 4QP Tel: 01633 744409 Fax: 01663 747038 Email: info@plainenglish.co.uk www.plainenglish.co.uk

People with learning difficulties

Change

Unit D Hatcham Mews Business Centre Hatcham Park Mews London SE14 5QA Tel: 020 7639 4312 Fax: 020 7639 4317 Textphone: 020 7639 4326 Email: londonoffice@changepeople.co.uk www.changepeople.co.uk

Learning Disability Task Force

You can get a copy of *Making things happen better* from this government department. Tel: 0808 808 1111 www.doh.gov.uk/learningdisabilities

Mencap

123 Golden Lane, London EC1Y ORT Tel: 020 7454 0454 Fax: 020 7696 5540 Email: information@mencap.org.uk www.mencap.org.uk

People First

299 Kentish Town Road London NW5 2TJ Tel: 020 7485 6660 Email: info@peoplefirstltd.com



The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries

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> The **Disability Portfolio** is a collection of 12 guides on how best to meet the needs of disabled people as users and staff in museums, archives and libraries. It gives invaluable advice, information and guidance to help overcome barriers and follow good practice.

The Portfolio is available in 12 point clear print or 15 point large print formats, braille, audio cassette and on the website. Please contact 020 7273 1458 or info@resource.gov.uk

Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries 16 Queen Anne's Gate London SW1H 9AA Tel: 020 7273 1444 Fax: 020 7273 1404

www.resource.gov.uk