

New

Revision

## [Housing Services]

# Communicating in Accessible Formats Policy

**Version: 2.1**

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<b>Scope:</b>	This policy applies to all departments and Local Service Regions of the Hyde Group.
<b>Policy Applies to Job Role</b>	Customer Services Team Resident Services Team
<b>Effective Date:</b>	July 2016
<b>Review Date:</b>	July 2019
<b>Risk Priority</b>	A (Legislative & Regulatory Impact)
<b>Signed Off:</b>	Operations Management Team
<b>Author:</b>	Maxine Gordon: Head of Customer Services
<b>Supported by:</b>	Chris Harrington: Policy and Compliance Team
<b>Policy Owned by:</b>	Diversity and Inclusion Group
<b>National Standards/ Regulation/Legislation:</b>	Regulatory framework for social housing in England (April 2012): Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard – Customer Service, Choice and Complaints.  Regulatory framework for social housing in England (April 2012): Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard – Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants.  Equality Act 2010
<b>Compliance</b>	Head of Customer Services

# Communicating in Accessible Formats Policy

## 1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The Hyde Group has a commitment to ensure that our residents can access our services with ease, irrespective of language, sensory impairment or disability and literacy skills.
- 1.2 Communication preference data is collected from all of our customers so where possible we can provide communications in alternate formats. Documents in alternative formats are made available on request by the resident.
- 1.3 Contact centre staff and staff in all operational teams are responsible for responding to customer requests for alternate formats and ensuring that communication generated is sent out in the appropriate format or in one of the agreed community languages if required. Each Resident Services region has a budget to carry the cost of providing translation, transcription and interpreting services.
- 1.4 All legal and statutory documents should be made available in alternate formats or in relevant community languages (see section 6). Where possible these will be translated or transcribed in their entirety with the original English versions attached. For statutory communication the English versions of documents are considered as the legal documentation. Translations are for the customer's use and are not considered legally binding.
- 1.5 There will be a library of previously translated tenancy agreements on the Housing and Corporate Service Hubs.
- 1.6 Corporate documents (such as leaflets, surveys and newsletters) should have a statement in English that explains to customers how they may be able to get a copy in their preferred community language or format.
- 1.7 This should be read alongside Hyde's Communicating in Accessible Formats Procedure.

## 2 Policy Aims

- 2.1 The aims of the Communicating in Accessible Formats policy are to:
  - Ensure that all customers of The Hyde Group have equal access to information and services regardless of their location and communication requirements.
  - Provide a cost effective service that uses resources effectively and minimises duplication and waste.

## 3 Regulatory Code and Legal Framework

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 provides a framework that protects individuals from discrimination and promotes equality of access.
- 3.2 The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard of the regulatory framework for social housing in England (from April 2012) requires Registered Providers to provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards. Specifically Hyde in line with this standard Hyde will.
  - Treat all tenants with fairness and respect.
  - Demonstrate that we understand the different needs of our tenants.

## **4 Louder than Words**

- 4.1 Action on Hearing Loss (AHL) is the new name for Royal National Institute for Deaf People and they are the leading charity for people with hearing loss in the UK. The Customer Service Team is regularly audited against the AHL Louder than Words Accreditation Standards and has been accredited AHL status. Customer Service will continue to work with AHL to deliver the required standards to both Customers and Hyde Group Staff.

## **5 Language Line**

- 5.1 Language Line's UK operation is part of the worldwide Language Line Solutions group. Language Line Solutions offer telephone interpreting and translation services. The Hyde Group uses Language Line services for telephone interpreting and transcription services only. This is on an as needs basis.

## **6 Community Languages**

- 6.1 Translation tags based on community languages will appear on all documents that are have a resident focus. All other documents will have a translation statement.
- 6.2 The current list of agreed community languages based on customer profile data is: Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic, Somali, Polish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Lithuanian, Vietnamese and Kurdish.
- 6.3 The list will be reviewed on an as needs basis and is currently based on data from the iWorld database only.

## **7 Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

- 7.1 The Communicating in Accessible Formats policy and connected procedures will be reviewed by the Head of Customer Services every three years or in response to any future regulatory changes. The review will ensure that a service is being offered that meet's resident's needs and expectations where applicable and are in line with this policy.
- 7.2 Diversity data will be analysed regularly and the list of community languages updated accordingly at Resident Services regional level.

## **8 Diversity and Inclusion**

- 8.1 The Hyde Group will treat all customers with fairness and respect. We recognise that we have an ethical and a legal duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination on the ground of age, sex and sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership
- 8.2 Diversity and inclusion training is mandatory for all staff.

## **9 Publicising the Policy**

- 9.1 The Group publicises its policy on Communicating in Accessible formats to customers, staff and other stakeholders in a number of ways, including:
- Residents Handbook, Policy Briefings and Training.

## Glossary

Term	Definition
Translation	The conversion of a written document from one form to another.
Transcription	The conversion of a document from a written language into another format such as large print, audio tape, Easy Read or Braille.
Interpreting	The Conversion of spoken dialogue from one language to another. This also includes the use of gestures or signs e.g. British Sign Language, as used by some deaf and hearing impaired people, or Makaton, as used by some people with learning disabilities.
Community Languages	Languages that have been identified as the most common languages spoken across the Hyde Group.
Customer	Any Hyde resident or anyone who is in receipt of a service provided by The Hyde Group or anyone who may potentially receive a service (e.g. Applicants).

## Related Documents

Document	Link
Connected policies and procedures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicating in Accessible Formats Procedure</li> </ul>
Forms and letters:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicating with our Residents and Customers Leaflet</li> </ul>
Leaflets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
Intranet / Website pages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication in Accessible Formats Guide</li> </ul>

## Version History

Version no.	2.1	Effective date:	4 July 2016 amended 30 September 2016
Full/partial review?			
Brief summary of changes:	<p>Minor Amendment made to section 9 of the policy.</p> <p>Updated to include the latest services we offer to residents and an updated list of community languages.</p>		
Staff consultation (teams):	<p>Communications</p> <p>Customer Services</p> <p>Policy and Compliance</p> <p>Property Services</p> <p>Resident Engagement</p>		

Resident consultation:	Resident's HRV Policy Subgroup
Signed-off by:	Operations Management Team
Date of sign-off	July 2016
Author:	Maxine Gordon, Head of Customer Services
Supported By:	Chris Harrington, Policy and Compliance Team
Policy owned by:	Diversity and Inclusion Group