



ISLINGTON

# HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## 4 September 2017

### SECOND DESPATCH

**Please find enclosed the following items:**

**Item 2** Housing Communications Scrutiny Review: Witness Evidence

1 - 48

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Evidence supplied by: The Deputy Head of Communications and Change

Housing Scrutiny Committee	Date: 4 September 2017	Wards: All
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### **SUBJECT: Housing Communication Scrutiny Review: Witness Evidence Background information on housing communications.**

#### **1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 This briefing provides the Committee with a range of background information about housing communications, further to the discussion at the 17 July meeting of the Committee.

#### **2. Channels**

- 2.1 An infographic and spreadsheet have been produced (see appendices) to indicate the main channels that are used to communicate about the housing service, by different key audience groups. As both documents indicate, the picture is complex and fragmented. The nature and frequency of communication will be different dependent on your tenancy type and management.
- 2.2 The council puts out regular 'broadcast' information such as the housing section in IslingtonLife. There are also direct and universal communications such as service change mailings. But a lot of additional interaction with residents will be at a much more localised and targeted level – and of course our residents' own consumption of our channels – whether printed or online will also vary.
- 2.3 As an organisation we are keen to encourage use of digital channels which also give us the opportunity to target information to residents around their interests. Social media also offers the potential for more informal and localised communication (as well as potential reputational risks). This is an area we are interested in developing.
- 2.4 Different channels are better for communicating certain types of information, or for engaging residents than others. Though we do a lot of communicating there is a gap in our knowledge about the channels residents prefer and there are some options such as SMS that are currently underused.

### 3. Which issues most concern our residents?

3.1 The Housing Service is complex and it is not always easy to judge which areas of it are most important to residents, but the service monitors its performance and this gives us a few clues.

For example, there is an independent survey of Resident Satisfaction run every two years across all tenures. The results from the latest survey in 2015 indicate that:

- repairs and maintenance are the priority for tenants and homeowners alike – though keeping tenants informed was among the top three concerns for tenants.
- tenants and homeowners are generally happy with their neighbourhoods
- litter and dog fouling are top of the list of anti-social behaviour concerns
- fewer than 50% tenants and homeowners were satisfied with opportunities to take part in management and decision making

The findings of the 2015 Residents Survey were reported to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in January 2016. The information received on resident priorities is set out below.

#### Service priorities - tenants

2013	%	2015	%
Repairs and Maintenance	65%	Repairs and Maintenance	73%
Keeping tenants informed	42%	Overall quality of home	48%
Overall quality of home	41%	Keeping tenants informed	45%

#### Service priorities - homeowners

2013	%	2015	%
Repairs and Maintenance	57%	Repairs and Maintenance	65%
Value for Money of Service Charge	53%	Value for Money of Service Charge	60%
Taking homeowners' views into account/ Dealing with anti-social behaviour	37%	Taking homeowners' views into account	41%

Complaints data provides additional clues. As the table below indicates, Complaints about service charges from leaseholders top the table followed by issues with tenancy management, estate services, ASB and income recovery.

### 3.2 Housing Operations - five service areas with highest level of complaints during 2016-17

Volume of stage 1 complaints by subject area

Subject area	Number of complaints
Service Charges/Leasehold Management	19
Tenancy Management	17
Estate Services	13
Anti-social behaviour	12
Income Recovery	9

3.3 Our web analytics indicate that users of our housing pages overwhelmingly are focused on organising repairs or else finding or bidding for homes. Viewing rent statements online and searches for estate management information are also popular (see Appendix 3 for more detail). If we want to drive engagement these are already useful clues as to the areas we could focus on first.

## 4. Quality control and evaluation

### 4.1 Quality control

Most priority external communication put out by the council is jointly managed by the service and Communications teams. Between us we aim to ensure that:

- copy is simple, clear and easy to read
- we are providing the right level of detail for the audience
- that the council's brand guidelines (design and writing style) are followed and that information is presented in an engaging way
- information is timely and, where multiple channels are used, effectively co-ordinated.

In most cases sign off will be required from a Service Head or Director before put anything out. For some priority areas – often where there are sensitivities or reputational issues at stake - the Lead Member will also be consulted. Examples might be consultations or the recent fire safety mailings.

### 4.2 Evaluation

**Qualitative evaluation:** Wherever possible we will try to test and evaluate communications - we have run focus group for example to test design ideas/how understandable messages are.

Some communications are easier to monitor than others. For example, consultations will generate offline and online feedback and comment – and will often involve direct engagement. So we can get a feel for both the awareness, quality and quantity of our responses.

We surveyed residents on the Resident Involvement Register in 2013 about 'Your Home' – the quarterly supplement for tenants and leaseholders distributed with IslingtonLife (it has now been fully incorporated to save money on production costs). The feedback was broadly positive – nearly 70% found it useful. The format, language and design were liked. Around 30% of recipients at the time were interested in receiving their copy online. Local and leaseholder news were considered the most useful items while items with a more local focus, more case studies/human interest stories and more resident voices were suggested as areas we could do more of.

When the council's website was overhauled, the housing pages were also user tested with residents and extensively rewritten prior to go live. (The website has since been given the top rating for accessibility and ease of use by SOCITM - which assesses government websites).

The Housing Service Review Group has also been a valuable source of feedback and the results of their recent reviews are summarised in the next section. The consistency in feedback indicates there are some common and ongoing issues for us to be aware of.

However, evaluation isn't always straight forward. The response to communications will often be mediated by other factors and may not be immediate so monitoring effectiveness can be a challenge – and can also create an extra overhead for the service (for example asking additional questions about where people found out information etc).

**Quantitative evaluation:** We don't monitor general awareness of housing issues on a regular basis. We are able to track consumption of digital media, for example we can run reports on web hits with google analytics. We use an e-marketing system called Dotmailer to create our council corporate e-bulletins and this also gives us information on the numbers who have opened our communications and bulletins, which items they have clicked on as well as bouncebacks (which in turn help to cleanse customer records on the council's customer database). Please note that these functions are not available using regular Outlook emails. Similarly, we can monitor numbers of people who have opened or retweeted our messages, and when, on Twitter using our management system 'social sign in'.

**Reputation management:** Our media team monitor press coverage and provide a daily report which is emailed to key contacts around the council – and respond where appropriate in consultation with Service Heads, Directors and Executive Members. Comments on Twitter are monitored using a daily rota in Customer Services and Communications in order to help manage our reputation.

## 5. Feedback from previous reviews carried out by the Housing Service Review Group

5.1 **New build:** Communications was part of the recent review of the new build process and provided a useful steer on a number of areas and we have taken action on most of these points:

Keep things simple:

- Consultation materials should refer to people who have experience of completed schemes
- Avoid over-long documents with too many words and not enough images. Use bullet points
- Avoid technical language
- Give contractors templates and guidance to keep their materials more consistent and accurate

Tone of voice

- Keep letters professional and empathetic
- Customer care and interpersonal skills important for project managers – a training need?

Keep it real!

- Use more images/videos of people inside the new homes rather than external shots
- CGIs or photographs of internal layouts at planning stage including people for scale for boards and website
- Use 3D presentation boards to include a person to help demonstrate the scale of the property
- Refer to people who have experienced other schemes that have now completed
- Make a video on the different stages of a development project.

Feedback and learning

- Carry out a satisfaction survey at the end of each project
- Produce a newsletter outlining learning that will improve the resident experience for future schemes

5.2 **Complaints:** Similar points were identified in a separate Scrutiny report on complaints. Two focus group discussions for example similarly identified plain English; empathetic tone of voice; accessibility; keeping things simple for residents; and feedback (for example publicising resolved complaints through "You said/we did" on the website and Your Home magazine). Other suggestions included, carry out a peer review of a % of complaints with other councils/ section and use the Housing Service Review Group to carry out an annual quality check of a sample of complaint responses.

## 6. Training and support for housing staff

- 6.1 **Communications toolkit on the intranet:** to help colleagues to 'self serve' the communications team have provided comprehensive and practical guidance which can be found under the 'Staff Essentials' section on the intranet. It includes:
- Word and powerpoint templates: to help colleagues create properly branded and accessible documents including letters, reports, newsletters and presentations.
  - Factsheets giving practical tips on everything from organising an event, putting together an award entry, to creating engaging web copy
  - Copywriting and plain English
  - Accessibility
- 6.2 **Panacea:** this is the council's online print and design management system. It includes a range of basic pre-set templates for posters and flyers that enable non-communications colleagues to produce properly branded and print-ready materials without using a designer. You tap in your copy and can you also pull in images – then press a button and the system will create you a document suitable for professional, high resolution printing. The templates are basic but are suitable for many of smaller distribution and low priority communications that services put out – and are a step up from what can be produced in Word.
- 6.3 **Corporate training:** the council's corporate Learning and Development team provide a range of courses that can assist colleagues with both written and face to face communication. These are not mandatory and in most cases will be agreed between staff and managers as part of the development plan set out as part of the appraisal process. Examples include:
- **Making Every Contact Count:** spotting opportunities in conversations with residents to signpost them to sources of help and support, for example SHINE for housing and energy help; iWork for employment support; and One You Islington for health advice and support. There is both an online and half day workshop option for this course
  - **Courageous conversations:** a half day workshop to help you plan and handle difficult workplace conversations
  - **Influencing and persuading:** a day workshop that teaches you techniques to read others, recognise your own style and maximise your impact.
  - **Customer care excellence:** a day workshop that covers all aspects of good customer service, including active listening, body language and handling conflict and aggressive behaviour.
  - **Write first time:** a day workshop aimed at improving written skills. It covers everything from planning and structure; tone of voice; grammar; vocabulary and plain English
- 6.4 **Bespoke support:** the Communications team provides bespoke support to Housing colleagues on request. In the past we have worked on a review of complaints letters and provided suggested templates and top tips for the team; we reviewed the new build process and provided the new build board with a recommended process for handling consultations and established templates for consultation documents and letters. Most recently we have run a workshop on letter writing that has explored tone of voice and use of 'nudge' theory.

## 7. Accessibility

**Language translations:** in line with council guidelines, the housing service provides information in different languages, where appropriate, to provide access to services. The council uses a company called Big Word to provide face to face and telephone interpretation which often find to be the most effective option as it enables the resident to interact. We can provide printed translations as well – though this tends to be rare. The top ten languages requested for telephone and face to face interpreting in 2016 across the council were: Turkish, Somali, Spanish, Portuguese, Bengali, Albanian, Arabic, Tigrinya, Sylheti and Lingala. We include a translation panel on the back of our main corporate publications and we always include a message at the end of our letters to prompt residents to request information if they need it in another language (see sections 6 and 7 of our brand guidelines, Appendix 6).

**Written house style – keeping it simple:** our guidelines stress the importance of plain language and a positive tone of voice to help make our written communication easy to understand and friendly. Our branding guidelines include a chapter dedicated to our written house style and this is available to all staff on the intranet (see section 8 of our brand guidelines, Appendix 6).

**Clear print principles:** our design guidelines follow RNIB's accessible design principles. These include use of font style and size; colour contrast and alignment to make our layouts easy on the eye. Our guidelines also include tips on making Word documents more accessible, using photosymbols and EasyRead which is the most appropriate format for people with Learning Disabilities (see sections 4 and 7 of our brand guidelines, Appendix 6).

**Online accessibility:** our new website has been designed in line with best practice guidance on accessibility. This means the design of the pages can be easily read by screen readers to help people with sight problems to access them. There is a link to accessibility advice in the footer on all pages: <https://www.islington.gov.uk/accessibility> which provides information on setting up your computer to make online information easier to access.

**Access for Deaf residents:** the council provides British Sign Language and videophone translations and include BSL videos that explain how to request these. Our in-house sign language team also helps to co-ordinate a BSL newsletter to help update on council news (we used this recently to promote fire safety advice) and there is also page for the local Deaf community.

**The Housing Disability Panel:** the Housing team consults with a panel of disabled residents who give feedback on various aspects of the service. We discussed communications at a recent meeting and received some helpful and practical feedback. This included:

- Considering holding regular drop in sessions for Learning Disabled residents
- Improving disability awareness training (especially for frontline staff)
- Reviewing the translation panel/footer to make it friendlier – perhaps with an offer to talk the letter through with you
- Using a more reassuring tone – and possibly tipping resident off in advance if we are about to send a complicated letter
- Making more use of SMS which is brief and more informal
- Keeping things as short as possible (a large volume of plain English is inaccessible)

The Communications team is working with the Housing service to take these forward.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Infographic of main housing communications channels (circulated separately)
- Appendix 2: Table of main housing communications channels
- Appendix 3: Website Statistics
- Appendix 4: Service Review Group Recommendations on learning from and responding to complaints
- Appendix 5: Service Review Group Recommendations on communications in the new build process
- Appendix 6: Extracts from the Islington Council Brand Handbook

## **Background papers:**

- None

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## Appendix 2 - Table of main housing communications channels

### Overview of channels by audience

#### Key

- Corporate channel
- Housing
- Non-council

	Estate tenants	Estate leaseholders	Partners tenants	Partners leaseholders	TMOs	TRAs	Members	Housing staff	Other council services*	External partners (VCS)
FACE TO FACE  Page 9	Sign up interviews  Caretakers  Area Housing Office  Resident Feedback groups  Tenant and Resident Panel meetings  TMO liaison meetings  Ward Partnership meetings  Estate events	Caretakers  Area Housing Office  Contact Centre  Tenant and Resident Panel meetings  TMO liaison meetings  Ward Partnership meetings  Annual Leaseholder fair  Estate events	Partners Office  Partners Forum	Partners Office  Partners Forum  Annual Leaseholders Fair	Project meetings  TMO liaison meetings  Ward Partnership meetings	Project meetings  Tenant and Resident Panel meetings  Ward Partnership meetings	Ward Partnership meetings	(see internal channels below)	(see internal channels below)	Project meetings and briefings

	Estate tenants	Estate leaseholders	Partners tenants	Partners leaseholders	TMOs	TRAs	Members	Housing staff	Other council services*	External partners (VCS)
PHONE	Housing Direct  Contact Islington  Area Housing Offices  ASB reporting line	Home-ownership team  ASB reporting line	Partners' office	Partners' office						
ONLINE	<a href="http://islington.gov.uk">islington.gov.uk</a>  housing repairs online  ASB reporting  <a href="http://islingtonlife.london">islingtonlife.london</a>  Islingtonlife ebulletin  Home connections.org.uk  Homeswapper.co.uk  Housingmoves.org  Cleaner Islington app	<a href="http://islington.gov.uk">islington.gov.uk</a>  ASB reporting  <a href="http://islingtonlife.london">islingtonlife.london</a>  Islingtonlife ebulletin  <a href="http://islingtonlettings.org">islingtonlettings.org</a>  Cleaner Islington app	<a href="http://islington.gov.uk">islington.gov.uk</a>  ASB reporting  <a href="http://islingtonlife.london">islingtonlife.london</a>  Islingtonlife ebulletin  Home connections.org.uk  Homeswapper.co.uk  Housingmoves.org	<a href="http://islington.gov.uk">islington.gov.uk</a>  ASB reporting  <a href="http://islingtonlife.london">islingtonlife.london</a>  Islingtonlife ebulletin	<a href="http://islington.gov.uk">Islington.gov.uk</a>  <a href="http://islingtonlife.london">islingtonlife.london</a>	<a href="http://islington.gov.uk">Islington.gov.uk</a>  <a href="http://islingtonlife.london">islingtonlife.london</a>	<a href="http://islington.gov.uk">Islington.gov.uk</a>  <a href="http://islingtonlife.london">islingtonlife.london</a>	<a href="http://islington.gov.uk">Islington.gov.uk</a>  <a href="http://islingtonlife.london">islingtonlife.london</a>	<a href="http://islington.gov.uk">Islington.gov.uk</a>  <a href="http://islingtonlife.london">islingtonlife.london</a>  Direct email	

	Estate tenants	Estate leaseholders	Partners tenants	Partners leaseholders	TMOs	TRAs	Members	Housing staff	Other council services*	External partners (VCS)
SOCIAL MEDIA	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook	@islingtonlife @islingtonbc facebook
NEWS LETTERS	IslingtonLife housing pages Resident Involvement Register newsletter	IslingtonLife housing pages	IslingtonLife housing pages Partners newsletter	IslingtonLife housing pages Partners newsletter	IslingtonLife housing pages	IslingtonLife housing pages	IslingtonLife housing pages	IslingtonLife housing pages	IslingtonLife housing pages	IslingtonLife housing pages
POSTERS NOTICES	Electronic notice boards Site noticeboards Posters in AHOs Site hoardings	Electronic notice boards Site notice boards Site hoardings			Electronic notice boards Site notice boards Site hoardings	Electronic notice boards Site notice boards Site hoardings				

	<b>Estate tenants</b>	<b>Estate leaseholders</b>	<b>Partners tenants</b>	<b>Partners leaseholders</b>	<b>TMOs</b>	<b>TRAs</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Housing staff</b>	<b>Other council services*</b>	<b>External partners (VCS)</b>
DIRECT MAIL    Page 12	Council tax / benefits mailing									
	Rent/Service charge mailing	Rent/Service charge mailing	Rent/Service charge mailing	Rent/Service charge mailing						
	New build consultations	New build consultations			New build consultations	New build consultations	New build consultations			
	7 year cyclical maintenance notices									
INTERNAL							Intranet ICbulletin Friday Feature Email Briefings from Directors Project meetings	Intranet ICbulletin Staff Update bulletin (offline staff) Managers Update Friday Feature Email Core Brief e-bulletin Homes and Communities e-bulletin Project meetings	Intranet ICbulletin Staff Update bulletin for offline staff Managers Update Friday Feature Email	

	<b>Estate tenants</b>	<b>Estate leaseholders</b>	<b>Partners tenants</b>	<b>Partners leaseholders</b>	<b>TMOs</b>	<b>TRAs</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Housing staff</b>	<b>Other council services*</b>	<b>External partners (VCS)</b>
MEDIA	Local press  London and national press	Local press  London and national press  Trade press								

\*Key council contacts: Finance, CI, IMAX, ASS, Planning; Greenspace; ASB; Children's Services

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# Appendix 3 - Housing Website Statistics - islington.gov.uk

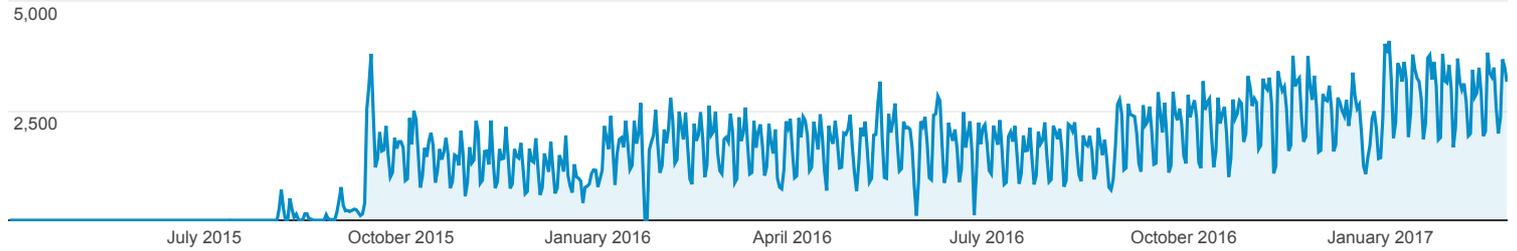
/housing

All Users  
16.56% Pageviews

Apr 1, 2015 - Mar 1, 2017

Report Tab

Pageviews



Page	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Users	New Users	Bounce Rate	Avg. Time on Page
	1,014,199 % of Total: 16.56% (6,122,806)	742,826 % of Total: 16.82% (4,416,162)	181,350 % of Total: 17.98% (1,008,517)	128,519 % of Total: 12.75% (1,008,148)	45.31% Avg for View: 44.16% (2.62%)	00:00:53 Avg for View: 00:01:08 (-22.39%)
1. /housing	<b>188,323</b> (18.57%)	143,957 (19.38%)	91,145 (16.74%)	48,888 (38.04%)	29.33%	00:00:38
2. /housing/repairs-and-estate-management/repairs/request-a-repair-form	<b>80,333</b> (7.92%)	25,108 (3.38%)	23,084 (4.24%)	51 (0.04%)	18.04%	00:00:08
3. /housing/finding-a-home/council-housing/bid-for-housing	<b>62,104</b> (6.12%)	47,624 (6.41%)	23,024 (4.23%)	6,196 (4.82%)	65.24%	00:02:10
4. /housing/finding-a-home	<b>54,601</b> (5.38%)	41,561 (5.59%)	27,922 (5.13%)	474 (0.37%)	46.67%	00:00:39
5. /housing/finding-a-home/council-housing	<b>41,099</b> (4.05%)	30,830 (4.15%)	23,003 (4.23%)	3,062 (2.38%)	26.61%	00:00:36
6. /housing/repairs-and-estate-management/repairs/requesting-repairs-online	<b>35,638</b> (3.51%)	30,211 (4.07%)	27,128 (4.98%)	359 (0.28%)	27.45%	00:00:14
7. /housing/finding-a-home/council-housing/the-housing-register	<b>27,922</b> (2.75%)	21,286 (2.87%)	15,808 (2.90%)	2,310 (1.80%)	44.43%	00:00:58
8. /housing/repairs-and-estate-management/repairs	<b>26,064</b> (2.57%)	17,097 (2.30%)	12,955 (2.38%)	3,070 (2.39%)	14.04%	00:00:23
9. /housing/council-tenant-services/rent/view-your-rent-statement	<b>25,163</b> (2.48%)	21,120 (2.84%)	6,738 (1.24%)	3,544 (2.76%)	75.50%	00:02:59
10. /housing/repairs-and-estate-management	<b>24,591</b> (2.42%)	17,277 (2.33%)	13,856 (2.55%)	803 (0.62%)	17.40%	00:00:18
11. /housing/council-tenant-services	<b>22,008</b> (2.17%)	17,405 (2.34%)	11,328 (2.08%)	141 (0.11%)	22.88%	00:00:19
12. /housing/council-tenant-services/rent	<b>21,175</b> (2.09%)	16,098 (2.17%)	8,574 (1.58%)	2,186 (1.70%)	51.68%	00:01:22
13. /housing/council-homeowner-services	<b>16,175</b> (1.59%)	10,607 (1.43%)	8,655 (1.59%)	2,225 (1.73%)	25.19%	00:00:30
14. /housing/repairs-and-estate-management/repairs/emergency-repairs	<b>16,004</b> (1.58%)	13,788 (1.86%)	9,164 (1.68%)	3,510 (2.73%)	76.26%	00:02:32
15. /housing/finding-a-home/council-housing/the-housing-register/the-housing-register-apply-now	<b>12,631</b> (1.25%)	10,231 (1.38%)	8,062 (1.48%)	260 (0.20%)	68.90%	00:04:44
16. /housing/private-sector-housing	<b>12,558</b> (1.24%)	9,279 (1.25%)	8,455 (1.55%)	303 (0.24%)	36.35%	00:00:23
17. /housing/finding-a-home/council-housing/number-of-points-that-resulted-in-successful-bids-2014-to-15	<b>10,346</b> (1.02%)	9,168 (1.23%)	7,029 (1.29%)	632 (0.49%)	75.88%	00:02:12
18. /housing/housing-offices-and-community-centres/area-housing-offices	<b>9,808</b> (0.97%)	6,640 (0.89%)	5,799 (1.07%)	892 (0.69%)	27.16%	00:00:39
19. /housing/private-sector-housing/private-rented-accommodation	<b>9,270</b> (0.91%)	7,110 (0.96%)	6,268 (1.15%)	265 (0.21%)	57.92%	00:01:15

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**Review: Learning from and responding to complaints (2015)**

*The findings of this review were previously reported to the Housing Scrutiny Committee*

**Detailed recommendations**

- 1.1 Ensure the experience of residents who use the complaints process is positive by adopting a more personal and empathetic approach to complaints handling**
- a. Listen and be polite at all times.
  - b. Arrange face to face interviews, where possible, when the resident requests this.
  - c. Acknowledgements via mail or email should be sincere and empathetic.
  - d. Letters should be written in a professional tone, sound sincere and be personal and empathetic.
  - e. Acknowledgement and interim responses should start with the phrase "Sorry to hear about your complaint. We will do our best to resolve it"
  - f. Apologise when the occasion demands, in an open manner, free from "ifs or buts".
  - g. Be clear when asking residents for information to support their complaint.
  - h. Help residents to "translate" their complaint by breaking it down in manageable portions; this will help those where English is not first language, where there are literacy issues or lack of IT skills.
  - i. Consider introducing a payment of £10.00 for all missed appointments.
- 1.2 Produce a Complaints Customer Care Standard and consider including:**
- a. Housing Needs, Housing Operations and Property Services divisions to implement section 9 of the Housing complaints procedure fully.
  - b. On receipt of a complaint (via letter or email) staff should telephone the resident to confirm details of the complaint within the timescales set out in the complaints process.
  - c. Offer face to face meetings to the resident to discuss the nature of the complaint.
  - d. Log and respond to emails within timescales set out in the Customer Care Standard.
  - e. Acknowledging complaints confirming the detail of the complaint within the timescales set out in the complaints process.
  - f. Provide examples of good and bad responses for training purposes.
  - g. Contact the resident on day 10 of the 21 day response cycle to confirm that complaint is being investigated.
  - h. Provide a full response within 21 days as set out in the complaints process.
  - i. If complaint cannot be responded to within 21 days then the resident should be advised when they can expect a response.
  - j. If the complaint cuts across more than one area of the council; one officer to be a single point of contact for the resident.
  - k. Avoiding using abbreviations and jargon.
  - l. Request for information/copies of documents should be clearly set out using bullet points and plain English.
  - m. If more than one issue is raised; each issue should be dealt with in turn.
  - n. If the resident has a known carer/advocate then complaint responses should be sent to them if the council has appropriate consent from the resident.
  - o. Check internal information systems to see if residents have specific needs (e.g. English as a second language, literacy, and mental health issues) and ensure response is tailored to the individual need.
- 1.3 Implement the Complaints Customer Care standard by:**
- **Publicising the complaints process:**
    - a. Tell residents that it does not cost them to make a complaint.
    - b. Provide standard definition of a complaint and examples of what is/is not a complaint on the website, estate noticeboards, electronic noticeboards and Your Home magazine.
    - c. Publicise the numbers of complaints and learning that has been achieved from resolved complaints on the website and in Your Home magazine.
    - d. Publicise the difference between a repair service request and a complaint.

- **Making the complaints pages on the Council's website more accessible:**
  - a. Publicise the existing generic email address managed by the Directors Support Unit for the Housing Needs, Property Services and Housing Operations divisions.
  - b. Include a postal address and telephone number for the three divisions.
  - c. Increase the space on the online complaint form.
  - d. Consider updating web page with seasonal information advertising preventative measures, e.g. Top 10 tips for looking after your home.
  - e. Develop a template to enable a carer/advocate to complain on behalf of a resident.
  
- **Housing Needs, Housing Operations and Housing Repairs Divisions to adopt similar learning from complaints processes**
  - a. All three divisional reports to include trends and learning in their reports
  - b. Consider having named officers from the three divisions who will have responsibility for monitoring that learning outcomes have been implemented.
  - c. Officers from three divisions to regularly update Customer Relation Management database.

#### **1.4 Monitor staff performance against set Complaints Customer Care standards**

- a. All staff who deal with complaints to undergo the complaints customer care training.
- b. Introduce periodic refresher courses.
- c. Use the staff performance management system and ways of working to monitor performance against a set Complaints Customer Care standard.
- d. Managers should sample check complaints responses.

#### **1.5 Continuously improve and develop complaints procedures through benchmarking and an annual check of a sample of responses by the SRG.**

- a. Benchmark among other providers to identify good practice.
- b. Carry out a peer review of a % of complaints with other departments and other councils.
- c. A sample of complaints should be reviewed annually by members of the Service Review Group.
- d. Consider using a specialist officer(s) or team(s) to deal with all complaints.

**Review: Communications in the new build process (2016)**

*The findings of this review were previously reported to the Housing Scrutiny Committee*

**Recommendations**

	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>General for all teams</b>	
1.1	Obtain feedback and publicise learning achieved	Include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All teams to carry out a satisfaction survey at the end of each project</li> <li>• Produce a newsletter about the scheme at the end of the project outlining learning achieved that will improve the resident experience for future schemes</li> </ul>
1.2	Look at different communication methods to improve customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications material should refer to people who have experience of completed schemes, using photos and videos from inside their new homes</li> <li>• Communications Team should provide the necessary templates and guidance for contractors so that the messages and material given to residents are consistent and accurate</li> <li>• The booklet for Parkview Homes was too lengthy and could have been more visually appealing. There were too many words and not enough illustration. The information was too technical in nature; use of layman's terms would make it easier for residents.</li> <li>• The storyboards at the consultation events could be more organised so that residents can gain an understanding of the works that will take place</li> </ul>
1.3	Involve the Inclusive Design Team so that accessibility is at the heart of a new development and publicise this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult the Inclusive Design Team to use the Joseph Rowntree Lifetime Homes Standards (recognising that the standards have changed to new ones that are less demanding)</li> </ul>
1.4	Improve the Customer Care experience	a. Consultation meetings should include time slots for residents who work irregular hours b. Project Managers to have customer care and interpersonal and communications skills training c. Refresher courses on use of written material to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The need for communications to be clear and simple with no jargon</li> <li>➤ That the tone of letters need to be professional and empathic</li> <li>➤ There should be less text on invites to events</li> <li>➤ The need to for more use of bullet points</li> <li>➤ The need for it to be clearer what the council wants residents to do</li> </ul>

<b>2</b>	<b>New Build team</b>	
2.1	Make the customer experience real for residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. CGIs or photographs of internal layouts at planning stage including people for scale for boards and website</li> <li>b. 3D presentation boards to include a person to help demonstrate the scale of the property</li> <li>c. Use imagery to show a person in a wheelchair in adapted properties</li> <li>d. Refer to people who have experienced other schemes that have now completed</li> <li>e. Make a video on the different stages of a development project</li> </ul>
2.2	Be open and transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Changes in design specification or anything else should be highlighted making it easier for residents to track all changes</li> <li>b. Arrange council organised risk management group meeting where residents can contribute on possible risk factors</li> <li>c. Clear role explanations of all experts involved – what they can do and can't do</li> </ul>
2.3	Be clear in all forms of communications to improve resident understanding of the new build process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Initial invitation for drop in meetings should prepare residents on what to expect– in and out of project scope</li> <li>b. Comms should have a role in explaining the local lettings policy – standard letters/ posters</li> <li>c. Clear explanation of the local lettings policy but ensure that it is clearly understood to those who are eligible. Consider a quick text survey?</li> </ul>
2.4	Advise non-resident leaseholders of the scope of the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Include as part of current process</li> </ul>
2.5	Develop a role for a residents champion	<p>Appoint a designated Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) in the new build team to act as a champion for residents, especially those who are not represented by a Tenants and Residents Association.</p> <p>The RLO would meet everyone affected over the project cycle.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given to what the best profile of the champion should be for each new build project. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person should not be a Council Officer</li> <li>• The person should not be a resident on the estate where works are being carried out</li> <li>• The person should be an independent, impartial party who provides reassurance to residents and who will assist in addressing issues and concerns from the residents regarding any issues that arise as a result of the New Build works.</li> </ul>

<b>3</b>	<b>Joint working</b>	
3.	Promote Joint working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Work closely with other councils on developing best practice for engagement</li> <li>b. Consider joint procurement</li> <li>c. The Inclusive Design team to discuss new New Building Regulations Approved Document M, Volume 1 – 3 categories – see notes</li> <li>d. Consult with Disability Action in Islington on design standards</li> </ul>

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# 4.0 Typography

## **4.1 Typefaces**

4.1.1 Corporate typeface for publishing

4.1.2 PC typeface

## **4.2 Clear print guidelines**

4.2.1 Typography and readability

# Corporate typeface for publishing

Foundry Sterling has been chosen as the primary corporate typeface for external communications because of its contemporary, unique feel and for its legibility in small and large point sizes.

This font has been approved by the Royal National Institute of Blind and Partially Sighted People (RNIB).

All design supplied on the matrix have this font. The minimum point size for body copy in publications is **11pt**. This conforms to the minimum 'x' height of 2mm as recommended by the RNIB in its clear print guidelines. See section 4.3 for further guidance. The RNIB has recommended that Foundry Sterling Light is not used.

**Important:**  
Foundry Sterling **must** be used for all external communication. Arial should only be used for PC-produced documents.

**Checklist for using Foundry Sterling**

-  Is the publication for external use?
-  Is the minimum point size for body copy 11pt?
-  Do not use Foundry Sterling Light

Foundry Sterling Book  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890!@£\$%^&\*()\_+<>  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Foundry Sterling Medium  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890!@£\$%^&\*()\_+<>  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Foundry Sterling Demi  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890!@£\$%^&\*()\_+<>  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Foundry Sterling Bold  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890!@£\$%^&\*()\_+<>  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Foundry Sterling Extra Bold  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890!@£\$%^&\*()\_+<>  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

## PC typeface

Arial has been chosen as the secondary corporate typeface for internally-produced and on-screen documents because of its clarity and readability.

This typeface is available as a system font on all computers.

Ideally use a minimum point size of **12pt** for body copy in Word documents – and no smaller than 11pt.

### Checklist for using Arial



Is the publication for internal use?



Is the minimum point size for body copy 12pt?

### Arial

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy

1234567890!@£\$%^&\*()\_+<>

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

### Arial Bold

**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy**

**1234567890!@£\$%^&\*()\_+<>**

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ**

## Typography and readability

**Clear and consistent use of typography is one of the most effective ways to build and maintain a strong identity.**

**The following rules will help make materials easier for all readers – but are especially important for making documents more accessible for people with sight problems.**

**For more detailed advice to enable you meet the information needs of blind and partially sighted customers, please contact the Communications team who have a reference copy of the RNIB's 'See it Right' information pack.**

### Alignment

The preferred layout is to have all text ranged left. Right-aligned and centred text should be avoided and text should never be justified.

### Leading/line spacing

If leading is too tight or too open, it can make the text difficult to read. As a general rule, the space between one line and the next should be 1.5 to 2 times the space between words on a line.

### Column spacing

If you are using text in columns, make sure the margin between the columns clearly separates them.

### Line length

As a general rule, long line lengths should be avoided as they are difficult to read. Ideally, line length should be between 60 and 70 characters per line.

### Letter spacing

Do not widen or tighten letterspacing, stretch lines of type or single words. The font's default setting has been considered in order to provide maximum legibility.

### Case

Upper and lower case should be used to aid legibility. Small caps and block caps should be avoided where possible. If necessary, capitals may be used to give emphasis to single words or short phrases (for example, for titles but not to set large blocks of text).

### Effects

Underlining, drop shadows, italics, outlining and other effects should be avoided. These should not be necessary and they make it more difficult for people to recognise the shape of the letters. Use bold for emphasis.

### Colour contrast

Care should always be taken when reversing text out of colour. Make sure that the type size is large enough and that the contrast between type and background colour is enough for clear legibility. Emboldening text can sometimes help. Large blocks of white text on a colour background should be avoided.

Ensure main body text is printed black. Colours may be used on headings and sub-headings as long as the colour is dark enough to be read easily.

### Figures in charts and tables

You can use fine keylines or discreet shading to help guide the reader's eye down or across columns of information to help make it easier to read.

Clear  
Accessible  
Simple  
Consistent

### Accessibility:

By law, the council needs to make information accessible for people with sensory and learning disabilities. See section 7.2 'Alternative reading and language formats' for more information.

# 6.0

## Contact details and translation information on back covers

- 6.1 Back covers
- 6.2 Information checklist

Accessibility is a key element of our identity. This is why back covers should **always** include:

- contact information
- further information
- how to access the information if your first language isn't English, or if you require an alternative reading format
- publication date
- environmental statement.

The following guidelines explain how to apply our set template and wording.

For more information about organising alternative language and reading formats, see the next section.

# Translation panel

A template has been set for back covers of standard sized publications. Where possible, printed material should be available in alternative languages to English. Space restrictions may limit the number of languages included.

The preferred colour for this panel is a 20% tint of the lime green. However, if your leaflet has a particular colour theme and the green does not complement this, then you can use any other colour from the palette as a 20% tint.

The following information should **always** appear in bold and 14pt at the top.

**Do you need this information in another language or reading format such as Braille, large print, audio or Easy Read?**  
**Please contact 020 7527 2000.**

This can then be followed by the appropriate language translations.

In very rare circumstances you will be unable to include the translations panel due to space restrictions. This should only ever happen on items that are smaller than DL. Even if the translation panel cannot be included the contact details panel must appear as detailed in the samples below and overleaf.

### Contact details

This includes the web address with its appropriate section reference eg [www.islington.gov.uk/recycling](http://www.islington.gov.uk/recycling).

The contact number should be the most easily accessible by residents. For example, if you are promoting a specific service with a designated telephone line then you should use that number. If not, you should list Contact Islington as the example below shows.

### Further information

Take the opportunity to provide signposting to other relevant sources of information where appropriate.

### Publication date and print information

Printed on xx% recycled paper using vegetable based inks. Published [month and year].

## Smaller than DL back cover



Contact details.

Print and material information, along with publication date.

Further information about other council services (if applicable).



Symbols are recommended to indicate telephone numbers, email etc as they can be more easily understood than letters.

DL back cover

A4 back cover

**Do you need this information in another language or reading format such as Braille, large print, audio or Easy Read?**

**Please contact 020 7527 2000.**

**Bengali**  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi

**Turkish**  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi

**Somali**  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi

**Chinese**  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi

**Contact Islington**  
222 Upper Street  
London N1 1XR  
@ contact@islington.gov.uk  
☎ 020 7527 2000  
☎ 020 7527 5001  
☎ 020 7527 1900  
🌐 www.islington.gov.uk

**Further information**  
Optional signposting to other relevant council services.

 Printed on xx% recycled paper using vegetable based inks. Published July 2011.

Contact information.

Print and material information, along with publication date.

Contact details.

Standard paragraph to appear in 14pt.

**Do you need this information in another language or reading format such as Braille, large print, audio or Easy Read? Please contact 020 7527 2000.**

**Bengali**  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in hendrerit in.

**Turkish**  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in hendrerit in.

**Somali**  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in hendrerit in.

**Chinese**  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in hendrerit in.

**Contact Islington**  
222 Upper Street  
London N1 1XR  
@ contact@islington.gov.uk  
☎ 020 7527 2000  
☎ 020 7527 5001  
☎ 020 7527 1900  
🌐 www.islington.gov.uk

**Further information**  
Optional signposting to other relevant council services.

 Printed on xx% recycled paper using vegetable based inks. Published July 2011.

Print and material information, along with publication date.

**Important:**

Recycled logo and 'Printed on xx% recycled paper using vegetable based inks' should be used when appropriate. It is important to make sure that all information stated is correct.

## Information checklist

The following information should be on the reverse of all publications as shown.

- ✓ 'Do you need this information in another language or reading format such as Braille, large print, audio or Easy Read? Please contact 020 7527 2000.'  
The number given should be that of the person originating the document. Copy to be set in Foundry Sterling Bold, 14pt on 17pt leading.
- ✓ Information on other ways we can communicate, eg SMS, Textlink, Language Line and Interpreter Hotline (when required).
- ✓ Translations (when required).
- ✓ Address details set in Foundry Sterling Book 11pt on 13pt leading. Details to include: Department name (in Foundry Sterling Medium) Islington Council. Full address details including postcode, telephone, fax, email and website.
- ✓ Further information (where appropriate) about other council services.
- ✓ Relevant symbols including Chartermark, liP, Beacon logo, disability symbol, stonewall accreditation (when required).
- ✓ Published date.
- ✓ Recycled logo and 'Printed on xx% recycled paper using vegetable based inks' text only to be used when appropriate.
- ✓ Print date and details.

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# 7.0

## Commissioning alternative language and reading formats

- 7.1 Commissioning alternative language and reading formats
- 7.2 Making regular documents more accessible

## Commissioning alternative language and reading formats

### Islington is proud to be a diverse borough and home to people from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures.

To assist our customers, where sensible the council offers to translate printed material in alternative languages to meet the needs of residents who require information in another language.

When selecting the alternative languages in which you will provide your materials, it is important that you consider the needs of the audiences you are trying to reach.

If the document could be translated in alternative languages, this should be explained in the corresponding languages on the back panel on the back page of the publication.

If a publication is specifically aimed at an audience who speaks a different language to English then it may be necessary to translate the information from the outset.

### The languages most commonly spoken in Islington are:

Turkish, Bengali, Somali, Arabic, Spanish, Albanian, Tigrigna, French, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Polish, Yoruba, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi and Portuguese.

A generic translation statement in each of these languages is available from the Communications team.

There is no central budget for translation services and it is the responsibility of the team producing the materials to manage their own budget for this.

Always seek advice before you organise a written translation as in some cases it may be more cost effective to recruit an interpreter. An Easy Read English version may be another option (see section 7.1 for more information).

It is important that we meet the needs of our customers by providing them with information and materials that are accessible and that they can understand.

### Commissioning alternative language and reading formats

The council has a set list of approved suppliers for translation and/or interpretation services. They all have an accredited qualification and are committed to a code of ethics which includes maintaining confidentiality and impartiality.

### Contacts for language translations

A list of contact details is available on the intranet at <http://izzi/alfresco/web/izzi/councilwide/comms/langservices/translation/>

Please note that certain languages – such as Arabic – will require both translation **and** specialist typesetting from right to left, in Cyrillic font. This could mean changing the way your document is designed. Please always speak to Communications for advice on getting a language translation laid out.

**Alternative reading formats**

Islington has made a commitment to ensuring that any information that enables someone to live their life with dignity will be accessible to disabled people in a format that they can understand.

- A visually impaired person may require us to communicate with them in large print (16 point or above), Braille or audio (CD).
- A Deaf person may prefer us to communicate with them through British Sign Language (BSL) DVDs/ web clips or SMS. The council’s Sign Language Service produces a BSL newsletter ‘Signpost’ and has a Facebook page, which are useful ways of promoting services to Deaf people.
- A person with learning difficulties may need ‘Easy Read’ information. Easy Read uses only the most common words that most people would use in everyday speech. Any difficult words, abbreviations or jargon have to be explained. Easy Read can also be an option for customers who don’t have English as a first language. There are also special ‘photosymbol’ illustrations for Easy Read documents to support text. They can be downloaded from [www.photosymbols.com](http://www.photosymbols.com). (Examples shown below. Please note that usage fees can apply.)

The council’s policy is to:

- provide essential information in an accessible way without having to be asked. So if we know a resident reads 16 point large print, we aim to send them letters and other documents in 16 point
- reactively provide accessible information on request. For more details, see the accessible information policy on izzi at: <http://izzi/alfresco/web/izzi/staff/equalities/accessible/>

**Suppliers of alternative formats**

The council’s Islington Learning Disabilities Partnership can provide help with producing Easy Read information. They can be contacted at:

T 020 7527 6600  
E [learning.disabilities@islington.gov.uk](mailto:learning.disabilities@islington.gov.uk)

The Equalities team publishes a list of local suppliers on the intranet at: <http://izzi/alfresco/web/izzi/staff/equalities/accessible/show/>

Greenspace has produced some useful guidelines on making events more accessible. See izzi or contact Communications for more information.

**Other useful external contacts:**

Royal National Institute of Blind and Partially Sighted People: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)  
Action on Hearing Loss (formally RNID) [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)



## Making PDF and Word documents more accessible

### PDFs

PDFs can be made more accessible through the use of heading levels, tags, bookmarks and alt text (like websites).

This enables people using screen reader software to understand the structure of the document and navigate through it. The alt text facility provides information about the purpose of images and graphics. The tagging allows the creator of the PDF to give guidance on the order in which the information should be read.

You should also set the PDF up using 'page per view' rather than spread per view.

More guidance is available at [www.adobe.com/accessibility](http://www.adobe.com/accessibility) or from the following resources:

#### Advice on creating accessible content for persons with disabilities using InDesign and Acrobat Professional:

[www.tv.adobe.com/watch/accessibility-adobe/preparing-indesign-files-for-accessibility/](http://www.tv.adobe.com/watch/accessibility-adobe/preparing-indesign-files-for-accessibility/)

#### Advice on accessibility best practice using Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro:

[www.adobe.com/accessibility/products/acrobat/pdf/A9-access-best-practices.pdf](http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/products/acrobat/pdf/A9-access-best-practices.pdf)

#### Advice on creating accessible PDFs from Microsoft Word:

[www.adobe.com/accessibility/products/acrobat/pdf/A9-accessible-pdf-from-word.pdf](http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/products/acrobat/pdf/A9-accessible-pdf-from-word.pdf)

### Word documents

You can also make Word documents more accessible for people who use screen readers by styling them up using the 'styles and formatting' function under 'format'.

This means that you assign pre-set heading styles and hierarchies to your document.

The recommended format for black and white documents is:

- Arial, bold, 16pt for 'heading 1'
- Arial 'heading 14'
- Arial, 12, regular for body copy (normal)

You can amend the pre-set formats in your system by selecting elements and selecting 'modify' from the drop down menu to the right and then 'automatically update'.

Once all the styles have been applied, you can view an overview of the document structure by going to 'view' and 'document map'. This will, in turn, generate a kind of contents listing under all the headings.

# Section B: Writing style

## Writing style

**Almost as important as the way we visually present ourselves, is the way we write. Sometimes, the way we say things is just as important as what we say.**

Alongside our corporate identity, adopting a uniform writing style helps to send a message to our service users that we are all one organisation and that they can expect any communication we send to be written in a clear and consistent way.

Although we all have different ways of writing, following this writing style guide will:

- help us all when writing for the public and for internal documents
- make our publications easy to read
- provide a better service
- clearly indicate that all our publications come from one organisation
- help to improve the public's perception of the council.

### Abbreviations

When you use an abbreviation, always write the word out in full the first time, followed by the abbreviation in brackets. For example, Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO). Then use the abbreviation on its own for the rest of the document.

Initialisations should use capital letters without full stops when each letter is representative of a word in the title, for example, corporate management board would be CMB.

Acronyms begin with a capital letter, for example, Unicef or Unison.

### Address

When addressing someone by name, for example, Dear James, sign off with 'Yours sincerely'.

When addressing someone by title or job, for example, Dear Director, sign off with 'Yours faithfully'.

Addresses should be written without punctuation, for example:

**Islington Council**  
7 Newington Barrow Way  
N7 7EP

### Alignment

All text should always be left justified, including headings. Indenting of paragraphs is not necessary.

### Ampersands (&)

Always write 'and' in full.

### Articles

There are three articles:

**use:** 'The' when the noun is specific, for example, the council.

**use:** 'A' when the noun is generic and the article is followed by a word with a consonant sound, for example, a councillor.

**use:** 'An' when the noun is generic and the article is followed by a word with a vowel sound, for example, an officer.

### Capital letters

Capital letters make reading more difficult and should only be used when necessary.

**Use capital letters:**

- to start a sentence
- for directorate names, for example, Corporate Resources
- for specific job titles, for example, Director of Finance
- for names of buildings, streets, areas, deities and some institutions, such as the Church
- for the Government, when referring to the current administration, but government when referring to an institution (like government bodies).

**Do not use capital letters:**

- for the council, the directorate, the borough
- for council services, for example, traffic and transportation or communications
- for names of committees, subcommittees, panels and other bodies, for example, south area committee, citizens' panel
- when referring generally to jobs or positions, for example, managers, officers, councillors, refuse collectors, librarians, social workers, head teachers
- when referring generally to local authorities, borough councils, district councils, parish councils, town councils, health authorities, police authorities
- for words like 'county', 'district' and 'region', unless they start a sentence

- for points of the compass unless they are part of a proper name such as South Kensington, or denote a region, such as unemployment in the South East
- for nouns that are not proper names
- for the seasons of the year
- for subject headings.

### Councillors

Do not use capital letters when you write 'councillor' unless it forms part of a title, for example, Councillor Anne Other. Use the abbreviation Cllr not Coun, for example, Cllr Anne Other.

### Dates

Write as 8 September 2011

not: 8th September 2011  
September 8th 2011  
September 8 2011

When referring to financial years or school years write as 2011/12.

not: 2011- 12  
2011/12  
2011-2012

### Emphasis

Use bold to emphasise a word rather than capital letters or underlining. This is easier to read and avoids confusion particularly as underlined text is often used to show links to Internet pages.

### Italics

Do not use italics as they are difficult to read because it's hard to recognise word shapes if all the letters are set at an angle.

### Fonts

Ideally use Arial 12 point in Word documents (11 point minimum) to make text clear and easy to read.

### Islington Council

Use initial capitals for the full name Islington Council, but when shortened it is 'the council'.

### Money

Use the £ sign followed by figures, for example, £20.

Always spell out whole numbers when in text, for example, 'the bill ran into several hundred pounds'.

Write millions and billions as £2m, £30bn.

Write pounds and pence as £32.25 not £32.25p.

### Numbers

Spell out words one to ten.

Use figures for numbers 11 upwards.

Spell out measurements, percentages and fractions if at the beginning of a sentence, for example, 'Twenty percent of residents responded'. Otherwise, use numbers for measurements, percentages and fractions, for example, 'The turnout was 20%'.

Numbers above 999 must have a separating comma, for example, 1,500 or 50,950.

### Spaces

One space after a full stop is sufficient, as word processing will adjust the space accordingly.

### Subject verb agreement

Nouns denoting a single group of people, for example, council, government, team, public, use a singular verb, for example: the team is organising...; the public needs information.

If you prefer the plural form of a group noun, write 'members of' or personalise in some other way, for example: members of the team are organising; members of the public need information.

### Telephone numbers

In a sentence, use the word 'telephone' (lower case 't'), for example, telephone 020 7527 2000.

When included as part of an organisation's contacts details, you can use T followed by the number, for example, T 020 7527 2000.

For internal documents where you include an extension number, write 'ext 3263' not 'x 3263'.

For full London telephone numbers, write the area code first, leave one character space, write the next four digits, leave another character space and then write the last four digits, for example, 020 7527 2000.

For other regional numbers, write the area code first, then leave one character space, followed by the rest of the number, for example, 01794 234567.

The same applies to mobile numbers, for example, 07890 123456.

### Times

- Use the 12-hour clock instead of the 24-hour clock, for example, 7.30pm not 19:30hrs.
- Use a full stop to separate hours and minutes instead of a colon, for example, 9.15pm not 9:15pm.
- Use am and pm with hours in numbers only not spelt out, for example, 9am not nine am but nine o'clock.
- Do not include zero minutes with hours unless necessary, for example, 9am not 9.00am but 9.15am.
- Write 12 noon (with a space) not 12pm.

### Verbs – active and passive voice

The clearest order is subject, verb object.

Use the active voice whenever possible, subject before verb, for example, the manager called a meeting.

Avoid the passive voice (subject after the verb) as this is very unfriendly, for example, the meeting was called by the manager.

Only use the passive voice if there is no subject, for example, penalties will be applied.

### Weights and measures

Use decimal and metric systems. Use abbreviations with figures and no spaces, such as 4mm, 10.2cm, 100m, 90km, 250gm, 5.5kg.

### Punctuation marks

#### Apostrophes

The apostrophe is used for three reasons:

1. **to show that letter(s) have been left out:**
  - can't, don't, isn't, I'm
2. **to show possession. The position of the apostrophe depends on the possessive noun:**
  - a. for singular nouns:  
a customer's complaints
  - b. for regular plural nouns:  
many customers' complaints
  - c. for irregular plural nouns:  
the children's complaints
3. **to show expressions of time:**
  - Thursday's meeting, seven days' notice, one week's pay

Remember, don't use apostrophes with pronouns.

- the council's policies
- its policies

'It's' with an apostrophe means 'it is' or 'it has', not 'belonging to it'.

#### Brackets

Use brackets to add something to the sentence, for example, the resident (from number 10) asked a question.

The full stop comes outside the bracket unless what is in the bracket is a full sentence.

### Colons

Colons are always used to introduce any list, for example,

- only three people turned up for the meeting: Sarah, Rachel and Jane.

Colons can also be used to make a break when something explanatory follows:

- she had achieved her ambition: she was a member of the board.

### Commas

Use commas:

- for a breathing pause in the sentence, for example, 'When they arrived, the meeting was over'
- in a list, for example, 'I went to the shop and bought bread, milk, cheese, tea and coffee'
- in pairs, in the same way we use brackets, for example, 'My line manager, John Smith, can help with this'.

### Dashes

Use a single dash in the same way as a colon – to mark a break.

Use paired dashes – but only in the middle of a sentence – in the same way you would use brackets.

Make sure you use a dash (–) and not a hyphen (-).

### Exclamation marks

An exclamation mark is used to show strength of feeling. Only use them in those circumstances:

- That's terrible!
- Wow!

### Full stops

Do not use full stops between initials, for example MP not M.P.

Do not use after abbreviations such as Mr, Ms, Dr, Ltd, Cllr.

### Hyphens

Use hyphens to avoid confusion:

- Mother to be asked... is not the same as Mother-to-be asked...

Use hyphens to distinguish between similar words, such as:

- reform and re-form
- resign and re-sign.

Hyphens can also be used:

- in double-barrelled adjectives, such as middle-aged
- with some prefixes, such as antenatal
- in phrases, such as t-shirt, door-to-door
- to avoid words with two consonants or vowels together, such as preempt, shelllike.

### Inverted commas

Use double inverted commas to show direct speech. The full stop comes outside the inverted comma/s unless what is inside is a full sentence:

- the policeman said "You were driving far too quickly".

Use single quotation marks when a quotation appears within a quotation:

- she said "Don't say 'I know what you mean,' as you have no idea".

Use single inverted commas when quoting from a report, quoting a title of a book, play or film or when referring to a particular letter:

- I have just finished reading 'Catch 22'
- 'Star Wars' was great
- the letter 'm' refers to meeting.

### Lists and bullet points

Lists and/or bullet points can break down information into manageable chunks. Do not use full stops or semi-colons to punctuate your list. Aim for a maximum of five bullet points as a guide. Use numbered lists if there is a priority to the order:

**If you are the last person to leave the office, please make sure you:**

- turn out all the lights
- lock the door
- leave the key at the front desk.

Use bulleted lists if there is no priority to the order:

**When you sit your examination please bring with you:**

- a pen
- a pencil
- an A4 writing pad.

### Question marks

Question marks are only used at the end of a direct question:

- how are you going to tackle the problem?

They are not used at the end of indirect questions or polite requests:

- the director has asked how we are going to tackle the problem.

### Semi-colons

The semi-colon acts as a weak full stop or a strong comma, to separate two very closely related sentences:

- we have studied this problem for several days; there are no easy answers
- I drive an old car; Steve drives a new one.

## The plain English idea

**Plain English is a way of writing that gets your meaning across clearly and concisely with your readers' needs in mind. It includes the clear design and layout of documents to make them easier to read and to help those with visual impairment. It also removes jargon, technical and legal terms, waffle and 'council speak'.**

### Why use plain English?

Using plain English makes things faster to read and to write.

It helps to get your message across more easily and in a friendlier way.

It is more cost effective, cutting down on time and paper.

### Using plain English

Use plain English when you are writing. This means short concise sentences, avoiding jargon wherever possible. The council has corporate membership of the Plain English Campaign (PEC), a national organisation that encourages clear communication.

We can send our documents for checking and editing, after which they receive Crystal Marks for clarity.

If you have any questions about getting Crystal Marks or receiving plain English training, please contact Communications.

You can find out more about the PEC by visiting [www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)

### Preparation

Writing can be broken down into content and writing style:

- decide what you want your document to cover
- decide who you want to read and understand it
- make a plan showing the information in the order it will make sense
- look at your plan again later with 'fresh' eyes
- get your plan approved before you start writing
- don't skip the planning.

### Use everyday language

- use everyday words
- don't use 'baby language'
- don't use unnecessarily complicated language
- explain unfamiliar words or jargon as you go along, or use a glossary, but call it something else like 'useful terms'
- read your writing out loud. If there are any problems, you will hear where they are.

### Relying on your computer

Although some programs can give a quick overall assessment of certain aspects of your writing, they cannot tell you if your writing is good or not. Spell and grammar checks can never replace proof-reading by you or someone else.

### General points

The following points will help you to get your meaning across clearly and concisely with your reader's needs in mind:

- use language your audience will understand
- split your information into short, easily absorbed paragraphs or sections
- keep sentences short – an average of 15–20 words throughout the text
- don't include too many ideas in a sentence. One main idea, with possibly one sub-clause, is enough for most sentences
- be as brief as you can without losing clarity. The clearest word order is subject, verb, object
- avoid abbreviations if you can
- avoid jargon if you can. When you have to use particular words for the sake of accuracy, explain them in plain language the first time you use them
- keep punctuation simple and accurate
- be direct and clear. People respond more positively to a direct style. For example, 'We will tell you if...'; or 'I received your letter about...'
- write in the active rather than the passive voice: 'we will write to you', rather than 'a letter will be sent'; 'we will decide', rather than 'a decision will be made'

## The plain English idea

- repeat words rather than using alternatives simply for the sake of variety. For instance, it would be confusing to use 'client', 'customer', 'passenger' and 'ticket holder' in the same document if they all mean the same thing
  - avoid ambiguity. This could include:
    - pronouns such as 'it', 'this', 'they' if they don't refer back to something you have already mentioned
    - words which have different meanings in different contexts, for example, 'the council had to refuse the refuse'.
  - avoid negatives. 'Please return the form by 1 April 2011' is friendlier and easier to understand than 'We will not be able to deal with forms after 1 April 2011'
  - avoid using nouns where the infinitive of the verb is better. Use:
    - we would like you to apply rather than 'make an application'
    - we would like you to deliver rather than 'make a delivery'
    - we would like you to decide rather than 'make a decision.'
- are best placed between two sentences:
- 'and' (this means an addition is following)
  - 'or' (this means an alternative is following)
  - 'but' (this means a contrast is following)
  - 'because' (this means a reason is following)
  - split infinitives but only by one word, so you can say 'to publicly acknowledge'
  - end a sentence with a preposition (for example, 'in', 'on', 'up', 'to', 'over', 'with', 'by', 'of and so on') when it's a question, for example, 'who are you writing to?'
  - end a sentence with a preposition if you believe it sounds natural, for example, 'the council hasn't considered this before'.
  - put a comma before 'and', 'or' and 'but'
  - use 'I' and 'we' in the same sentence as long as you are not confusing the reader.

### Plain English ideas to help make your sentence flow better.

#### It's ok to:

- start a sentence with conjunctions that can be placed between sentences or at the beginning of sentences, for example, 'so', 'therefore', 'also' 'however'. These are linking words and sometimes lead to a second thought.

However, it is better not to start sentences with conjunctions that

#### Words and phrases to avoid

The words and phrases below often crop up in letters and reports. They are usually over-qualification and unnecessary so they can comfortably be removed from a sentence without changing the meaning or the tone:

#### Words

- absolutely
- abundantly
- actually
- basically
- currently
- existing
- extremely
- obviously

- of course
- quite
- really
- very

#### Phrases

- all things being equal
- as a matter of fact
- as far as I am concerned
- a total of
- at the end of the day
- at this moment in time
- each and every one
- I am of the opinion that
- in due course
- in other words
- in the end
- in the final analysis
- in respect of
- in this connection
- in total
- in view of the fact that
- it should be understood
- I would like to say
- I would like to take this opportunity
- last but not least
- other things being equal
- the fact of the matter is
- the month(s) of
- to all intents and purposes
- to be honest
- to one's own mind

If you find yourself about to write, type or dictate a word you wouldn't use in everyday conversation, look it up in the A to Z of alternatives on the following pages. Often there will be a choice of several words you could use instead. Pick one that best fits what you are trying to say and is best for the reader.

Remember, write to express, not to impress.

## Plain English A-Z

- A**
- (an) **absence of** – no, none
  - abundance** – enough, plenty, a lot (or say how many)
  - accede** – to allow, agree to
  - accelerate** – speed up
  - accentuate** – stress
  - accommodation** – where you live, home
  - accompanying** – with
  - accomplish** – do, finish
  - according to our records** – our records show
  - accordingly** – in line with this, so
  - acknowledge** – thank you for
  - acquaint yourself with** – find out about, read
  - acquiesce** – agree
  - acquire** – buy, get
  - additional** – extra, more
  - adjacent** – next to
  - adjustment** – change, alteration
  - admissible** – allowed, acceptable
  - advantageous** – useful, helpful
  - advise** – tell, say (unless you are giving advice)
  - affix** – add, write, fasten, stick on, fix to
  - afford an opportunity** – let, allow
  - afforded** – given
  - aforsaid** – this, earlier in this document
  - aggregate** – total
  - aligned** – lined up, in line
  - alleviate** – ease, reduce
  - allocate** – divide, share, add, give
  - along the lines of** – like, as in
  - alternative** – choice, other
  - alternatively** – or
  - ameliorate** – improve, help
  - amendment** – change
  - anticipate** – expect
  - apparent** – clear, plain, obvious, seeming
  - applicant (the)** – you
  - application** – use
  - appreciable** – large, great
  - apprise** – inform, tell
  - appropriate** – proper, correct, right, suitable
  - appropriate** – to suitable for
  - approximately** – about, roughly
  - as a consequence of** – because
  - as of the date of** – from
  - as regards** – about, on the subject of
  - ascertain** – find out
  - assemble** – build, gather, put together
  - assistance** – help
  - at an early date** – soon (or say when)
  - at its discretion** – can, may (or edit out)
  - at the moment** – now
  - at the present time** – now
  - attempt** – try
  - attend** – come to, go to, be at
  - attributable** – due to, because of
  - authorise** – allow, let
  - authority** – right, power, may (as in 'have the authority to')
  - axiomatic** – obvious, goes without saying
- B**
- belated** – late
  - beneficial** – helpful, useful
  - bestow** – give, award
  - breach** – break
  - by means of** – by
- C**
- calculate** – work out, decide
  - cease** – finish, stop, end
  - circumvent** – get round, avoid, skirt, circle
  - clarification** – explanation, help
  - combine** – mix
  - combined** – together
  - commence** – start, begin
  - communicate** – talk, write, telephone (be specific)
  - competent** – able, can
  - compile** – make, collect
  - complete** – fill in, finish
  - completion** – end
  - comply with** – keep to, meet
  - component** – part
  - comprise** make up, include (it is)
  - compulsory** (you) must
  - conceal** hide
  - concerning** about, on
  - conclusion** end
  - concur** agree
  - condition** rule
  - consequently** so
  - considerable** great, important
  - constitute** make up, form
  - construe** interpret
  - consult** talk to, meet, ask
  - consumption** amount used
  - contemplate** think about
  - contrary to** against, despite
  - correct** put right
  - correspond** write
  - costs** the sum of costs
  - counter** against
  - courteous** polite
  - cumulative** added up, added together
  - currently** now
  - customary** usual, normal
- D**
- deduct** – take off, take away
  - deem** – to be treat as
  - defer** – put off, delay
  - deficiency** – lack of
  - delete** – cross out
  - demonstrate** – show, prove
  - denote** – show
  - depict** – show
  - designate** – point out, show, name
  - desire** – wish, want
  - despatch or dispatch** – send, post
  - despite the fact that** – though, although
  - determine** – decide, work out, set, end
  - detrimental** – harmful, damaging
  - difficulties** – problems
  - diminish** – lessen, reduce
  - disburse** – pay, pay out
  - discharge** – carry out
  - disclose** – tell, show
  - disconnect** – cut off, unplug
  - discontinue** – stop, end
  - discrete** – separate

**discuss** – talk about  
**disseminate** – spread  
**documentation** – papers, documents  
**domiciled** – in living in  
**dominant** – main  
**due** – to the fact of because, as  
**duration** – time, life  
**during** – which time while  
**dwelling** – home

**E**  
**economical** – cheap, good value  
**eligible** – allowed, qualified  
**elucidate** – explain, make clear  
**emphasise** – stress  
**empower** – allow, let  
**enable** – allow  
**enclosed** – inside, with  
**(please find) enclosed** – I enclose  
**encounter** – meet  
**endeavour** – try  
**enquire** – ask  
**enquiry** – question  
**ensure** – make sure  
**entitlement** – right  
**envisage** – expect, imagine  
**equivalent** – equal, the same  
**erroneous** – wrong  
**establish** – show, find out, set up  
**evaluate** – test, check  
**evince** – show, prove  
**ex officio** – because of his or her position  
**exceptionally** – only when, in this case  
**excessive** – too many, too much  
**exclude** – leave out  
**excluding** – apart from, except  
**exclusively** – only  
**exempt** – from free from  
**expedite** – hurry, speed up  
**expeditiously** – quickly  
**expenditure** – spending  
**expire** – run out  
**extant** – current, in force  
**extremity** – limit

**F**  
**fabricate** – make, make up  
**facilitate** – help, make possible  
**factor** – reason  
**failure** – to if you do not  
**finalise** – end, finish  
**following** – after  
**for the duration of** – during, while  
**for the purpose of** – to, for  
**for the reason that** – because  
**formulate** – plan, devise  
**forthwith** – now, at once  
**forward** – send  
**frequently** – often  
**furnish** – give  
**further** – to after, following  
**furthermore** – then, also, and

**G**  
**generate** – produce, give, make  
**give consideration to** – consider, think about  
**grant** – give

**H**  
**henceforth** – from now on, from today  
**hereby** – now, by this (or edit out)  
**herein** – here (or edit out)  
**hereinafter** – after this (or edit out)  
**hereof** – of this  
**hereto** – to this  
**heretofore** – until now, previously  
**hereunder** – below  
**herewith** – with this (or edit out)  
**hitherto** – until now  
**hold in abeyance** – wait, postpone  
**hope and trust** – hope, trust (but not both)

**I**  
**if and when** – if, when (but not both)  
**illustrate** – show, explain  
**immediately** – at once, now  
**implement** – carry out, do  
**imply** – suggest, hint at  
**in a number of cases** – some (or say how many)

**in accordance with** – as under, in line with, because of  
**in addition (to)** – and, as well as, also  
**in advance** – before  
**in case of** – if  
**in conjunction with** – and, with  
**in connection with** – for, about  
**in consequence** – because, as a result  
**in excess of** – more than  
**in lieu of** – instead of  
**in order that** – so that  
**in receipt of** – get, have, receive  
**in relation** – to about  
**in respect of** – about, for  
**in the absence of** – without  
**in the course of** – while, during  
**in the event of/that** – if  
**in the majority of instances** – most, mostly  
**in the near future** – soon  
**in the neighbourhood of** – about, around  
**in view of the fact that** – as, because  
**inappropriate** – wrong, unsuitable  
**inception** – start, beginning  
**incorporating** – which includes  
**incurred** – have to pay, owe  
**indicate** – show, suggest  
**inform** – tell  
**initially** – at first  
**initiate** – begin, start  
**insert** – put in  
**instances** – cases  
**intend to** – will  
**intimate** – say, hint  
**irrespective of** – despite, even if  
**is in accordance with** – agrees with, follows.  
**is of the opinion** – thinks  
**issue** – give, send  
**it is known that** – I/we know that

**J**

**jeopardise** – risk, threaten

**L**

**(a) large number of** – many, most (or say how many)

**(to) liaise with** – to meet with, to discuss with, to work with (whichever is more descriptive)

**locality** – place, area

**locate** – find, put

**M**

**magnitude** – size

**(it is) mandatory** – (you) must

**manner** – way

**manufacture** – make

**marginal** – small, slight

**material** – relevant

**materialise** – happen, occur

**may in the future** – may, might, could

**merchandise** – goods

**mislaid** – lose

**modification** – change

**moreover** – and, also, as well

**N**

**negligible** – very small

**nevertheless** – but, however, even so

**notify** – tell, let us/you know

**notwithstanding** – even if, despite, still, yet

**numerous** – many (or say how many)

**O**

**objective** – aim, goal

**(it is) obligatory** – (you) must

**obtain** – get, receive

**occasioned by** – caused by, because of

**on behalf of** – for

**on numerous occasions** – often

**on receipt of** – when we/you get

**on request** – if you ask

**on the grounds that** – because

**on the occasion that** – when, if

**operate** – work, run

**optimum** – best, ideal

**option** – choice

**ordinarily** – normally, usually

**otherwise** – or

**outstanding** – unpaid

**owing to** – because of

**P**

**(a) percentage of** – some, (or say what percentage)

**participate** – join in, take part

**particulars** – details, facts

**per annum** – a year

**perform** – do

**permissible** – allowed

**permit** – let, allow

**personnel** – people, staff

**persons** – people, anyone

**peruse** – read, read carefully, look at

**place** – put

**possess** – have, own

**possessions** – belongings

**practically** – almost, nearly

**predominant** – main

**prescribe** – set, fix

**preserve** – keep, protect

**previous** – earlier, before, last

**principal** – main

**prior to** – before

**proceed** – go ahead

**procure** – get, obtain, arrange

**profusion of** – plenty, too many (or say how many)

**prohibit** – ban, stop

**projected** – estimated

**prolonged** – long

**promptly** – quickly, at once

**promulgate** – advertise, announce

**proportion** – part

**provide** – give

**provided that** – if, as long as

**provisions** – rules, terms

**proximity** – closeness, nearness

**purchase** – buy

**pursuant to** – under, because of, in line with

**Q**

**qualify for** – can get, be able to get

**R**

**reconsider** – think again about, look again at

**reduce** – cut

**reduction** – cut

**referred to as** – called

**refer to** – talk about, mention

**(have) regard to** – take into account

**regarding** – about, on

**regulation** – rule

**reimburse** – repay, pay back

**reiterate** – repeat, restate

**relating to** – about

**remain** – stay

**remainder** – the rest, what is left

**remittance** – payment

**remuneration** – pay, wages, salary

**render** – make, give, send

**represent** – show, stand for, be

**request** – ask, question

**require** – need, want, force

**requirements** – needs, rules

**reside** – live

**residence** – home, where you live

**restriction** – limit

**retain** – keep

**review** – look at (again)

**revised** – new, changed

**S**

**said/such/same** – the, this, that

**salient** – the most important

**scrutinise** – read (look at) carefully

**select** – choose

**settle** – pay

**similarly** – also, in the same way

**solely** – only

**specified** – given, written, set

**state** – say, tell us, write down

**statutory** – legal, by law

**subject to** – depending on, under,

**submit** – send, give

**subsequent** – to/upon, after

**subsequently** – later

**substantial** – large, great, a lot of  
**substantially** – more or less  
**sufficient** – enough  
**supplement** – go with, add to  
**supplementary** – extra, more  
**supply** – give, sell, delivery

## T

**(the) tenant** – you  
**terminate** – stop, end  
**that being the case** – if so  
**the question as to whether** – whether  
**thereafter** – then, afterwards  
**thereby** – by that, because of that  
**therein** – in that, there  
**thereof** – of that  
**thereto** – to that  
**thus** – so, therefore  
**to date** – so far, up to now  
**to the extent that** – if, when  
**transfer** – change, move  
**transmit** – send

## U

**ultimately** – in the end, finally  
**unavailability** – lack of  
**undernoted** – the following  
**undersigned** – I, we  
**undertake** – agree, promise, do  
**uniform** – same, similar  
**unilateral** – one-sided, one-way  
**unoccupied** – empty  
**until such time** – until  
**utilisation** – use  
**utilise** – use

## V

**variation** – change  
**virtually** – almost (or edit out)  
**visualise** – see, predict

## W

**ways and means** – ways  
**we have pleasure in** – we are glad to  
**whatsoever** – whatever, what, any  
**whenever** – when  
**whereas** – but  
**whether or not** – whether  
**with a view to** – to, so that  
**with effect from** – from  
**with reference to** – about  
**with regard to** – about, for  
**with respect to** – about, for  
**with the minimum of delay** – quickly (or say when)

## Y

**you are requested** – please  
**your attention is drawn** – please see, please note

## Z

**zone** – area, region

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 The A to Z of alternative words

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