Local Accessible Information Policy

The Disability Equality Duty (2006) places a duty on all Public Authorities with regard to the planning of services for disabled people. It is the Scottish Government's Policy that this must extend to the provision of accessible information and advice and an essential part of this is that Public Authorities must develop a Local Accessible Information Policy.

What is a Local Accessible Information Policy
An established set of guidelines and procedures that help everyone in the organisation to understand and comply with legislation and good practice.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar seek to adopt a Local Accessible Information Policy to ensure that information and advice is available to all service users of the Comhairle in the preferred format of individuals to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged. The Disability Equality Duty is inclusive of all disabilities which includes people:-
- with visual impairments
- with hearing impairments
- with dual sensory impairments
- with impaired mobility
- with learning difficulties
- with specific literacy difficulties such as dyslexia
- with limiting illnesses such as epilepsy, cystic fibrosis, HIV, etc
- with mental health difficulties

A significant number of these people find it difficult to read the "average" information available from most service providers. As well as having a social responsibility to include traditionally excluded groups of people in our society, the law now demands that we do it.

In order to meet the duty the Comhairle must ensure that all information held online and in hard copy are accessible in a variety of formats. All information should be presented using plain and simple language which is easy to read and where appropriate a glossary is provided to explain difficult words or phrases

For online information the Comhairle website will be designed with the service users mind and findability, accessibility and usability has been considered the following must be considered:-
- Ability to change the colour of the website
- Ability to change the size of the text
- Ability to navigate around the website using a keyboard and access keys
- Ability to have a webpage read aloud to you using 'Read Speak' or 'Browse Aloud'
- Ability to download media files and documents

The design of the Comhairle website is in the process of being re-structured and aims that it conforms to the WC3 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These guidelines can be accessed using the following link http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/.   "These guidelines explain how to make Web content accessible to people with disabilities. The guidelines are intended for all Web content developers (page authors and site designers) and for developers of authoring tools. The primary goal of these guidelines is to promote accessibility." In addition, the Comhairle already provide access to "Browsealoud", which reads web pages aloud for people who find it difficult to read online.   Users can download this facility using the icon on the front page of the Comhairle website www.cne-siar.gov.uk.

For information that is held in hard copy the Comhairle must be able to provide the information in Braille and in different languages on request in addition to providing it in the requested colour, type size and type font. The Comhairle will source suitable contracts to provide information in different languages, type, etc on request. Due to the small population of the western isles it would not be cost effective to produce all information documents in different languages, type, etc and more realistic to provide the information within an agreed timescale (eg seven working days). Demand for this service will be monitored and evaluated, it should be recognised that there are now 19 different languages spoken in schools throughout the Western Isles which may influence future demand for these services. If a demand for such a service is evident the Comhairle will consider producing documents in a limited number of languages or type as a matter of course.

In addition to above the Comhairle will also consider the changing population of the Western Isles and the diversity that this brings. In order to take advantage of opportunities of diversity the Comhairle will establish whether there is a need to provide translation services on request and have selected staff trained in British Sign Language (BSL). Investigations are under way to determine the costs of entering into contracts to provide such services and analysis will be completed as to whether there is a demand for such services through the involvement of disabled people in the development of the Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan. Other alternatives will also be investigated which may address the needs of deaf people such as 'type talk' facility which would allow deaf people to communicate via the telephone.