# **Inclusive Communications Assessment**

The following guidelines are designed to prompt thinking on integrating inclusion into all our communications products.

You should consider how the policies, information or advice you are communicating affect different groups including people who are protected under the Equality Act. If the communication is about something which will affect them, you should ensure that you have done all you can reasonably be expected to do, to ensure they are able to receive and access the communication.

**Ask yourself: In planning and delivering this communication, have I taken steps to meet the needs of people with different protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people?**

The nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Things to consider are:

* Font
* Formatting
* Use of colour
* Word choice
* Medium
* Movement
* Representation
* Channel
* Message
* Evaluation

## Understanding your audience

When working at a fast pace to respond to urgent needs, it may not be possible to carry out a full assessment, conduct rigorous analysis of audience data or take all the actions you would wish to. Be aware that legal duties to ensure communications are inclusive and accessible are ongoing, so it is important to note that you will be considering the equality implications further and to set an appropriate date for review. The extent of your activities will vary from case to case, in proportion to the likely seriousness of the potential equality impacts. The important thing is to have given due consideration to the needs of the audience group and to take action to improve reach and accessibility. If you require any support on how best to prioritise accessibility with limited time and resources, please contact [geocommunications@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:geocommunications@geo.gov.uk).

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| **Audience groups** | **Do you particularly need for this audience (or a segment within it) to hear your message and act upon it?** | **What estimated percentage of your audience is made up of people with this characteristic?** |
| Older people | Y/N Details of target group: |  |
| Younger people/children | Y/N Details of target group: |  |
| Disabled people (physical or mental impairments) | Y/ Details of target group: |  |
| Transgender people | Y/N Details of target group: |  |
| Pregnant people | Y/N Details of target group: |  |
| People from ethnic minority backgrounds | Y/N Details of target group: |  |
| Women/men/non-binary | Y/N Details of target group: |  |
| People of different faiths and none | Y/N Details of target group: |  |
| LGBT+ people | Y/N Details of target group: |  |
| Intersectional groups (people with multiple characteristics) | Y/N Details of target group: |  |

## Communications needs

When working at a fast pace to respond to urgent needs, it is possible that you are only able to take limited actions to make your communication more inclusive. In those cases, the important thing is to have given due consideration to the needs of the audience group and to take whatever action you can to improve reach and accessibility, noting that you will be considering the equality implications further and to set an appropriate later date for review. The extent of your assessment activities will vary from case to case, in proportion to the likely seriousness of the potential equality impacts. If you require any support on how best to prioritise accessibility with limited time and resources, please contact [geocommunications@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:geocommunications@geo.gov.uk).

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| **Things to consider** | **Considerations - the needs of different groups** | **Relevance to your communication and decision made about how to address this need** |
| **Font** | **Is your minimum font size 14?**  This is important for people with disabilities and older people. |  |
| **Are you using a sans-serif typeface?**  This makes the words easier to read for those with sight loss, learning disabilities, dyslexia and other disabilities. | *Example: “People with visual impairment are a key audience for this communication and so we have ensured that the text on all our materials uses a sans-serif typeface.”* |
| **Formatting** | **Do all images and videos have alt-text?**  Alt text is the written copy that appears in place of an image on a webpage if the image fails to load on a user's screen. This text helps screen-reading tools describe images to visually impaired and blind readers and allows search engines to better crawl and rank your website. |  |
| **Are you avoiding watermarks and text written over background graphics as well as pale text on a dark background?**  These can be difficult to read for those with sight loss, learning disabilities, dyslexia and other disabilities. |  |
| **Use of colour** | **Are you using accessible colours to convey messaging (blue, green, yellow)?**  Some disabled people find certain colours harder to read and people with colour blindness may only see grey or nothing depending on contrast. Have you made sure that colour is not the only visual method for conveying information? [Background and example here](https://webaim.org/articles/contrast/#sc141). Please see the annex for further guidance. |  |
| **Are the colours you are using supporting gender stereotypes?**  For example, content aimed at women and girls which uses pink can be perceived both as patronising and a short cut to more nuanced targeting. |  |
| **Language** | **Is the language used non-gendered and culturally appropriate?**  Certain terms can be associated with certain genders and it is important to think about whether the language used promotes unhelpful stereotypes or inadvertently excludes people. See annex for further information.  Where appropriate also consider using ‘they’ instead of she/he to include non-binary people in the conversation. |  |
| **Is the language used easy to understand?**  National Reading Age is 9 so it is best to use simple, easily-understood words, avoiding jargon, colloquial phrases, technical terms and acronyms when drafting for the general public. This makes it more inclusive for those whose first language is not English and those with learning disabilities. |  |
| **Medium** | **Is there a need for your products to be available in a variety of different formats?**  E.g. EasyRead, large print, Braille, Audio-described, printed materials for those without access to the internet |  |
| **Should your material be translated into different languages?**  This can help to reach those for whom English is a second language or who speak no English at all. |  |
| **In addition to written materials, should you produce visual assets with little or no text?**  This can help to reach very young children or those with low levels of literacy. |  |
| **Movement** | **If producing videos, have you made sure to avoid flashing lights and photography to which some people are sensitive?** |  |
| **Have you avoided moving images behind text?**  This can be hard for screen reader users and disabled people with other conditions. However subtitles should be used on videos wherever possible. |  |
| **Have you kept Italics and moving fonts (e.g like handwriting) to a minimum?**  Italics can be inaccessible for many disabled people including those with Autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia and learning disabilities |  |
| **Representation** | **Is your target audience represented in your materials visually, orally and in the contexts and scenarios featured?** |  |
| **Is there a wide variety of people with protected characteristics represented in your materials in non-stereotypical ways?**  For example, do not only use wheelchairs to represent disabled people. |  |
| **Have you co-created/tested your concepts with people/organisations representing the relevant protected characteristics?** |  |
| **Have you ensured that expert views and guidance are coming from both women and men and those with multiple characteristics?** |  |
| **Have you avoided depicting men and women in stereotypical or traditional ways?** |  |
| **Channel and media mix** | **For paid and earned content, have you considered whether your message should be placed in specialist as well as mainstream outlets?** |  |
| **Have you given due consideration to the makeup of your audience in assigning your media budget? Has your forecasting and KPIs accounted for more specific/niche audiences potentially being more expensive to reach?** |  |
| **Have you considered partnering with community leaders, voluntary sector organisations or influencers to ensure your message gets to those who are harder to reach by traditional channels?** |  |
| **Message** | **Does messaging adhere to best practice on what appeals to the specific audiences targeted?** |  |
| **Have you considered whether you need to create variants of content to better appeal to subgroups of your target audience?** |  |
| **Evaluation** | **Have you considered how you will monitor the impact of your approach and how addressing the above needs has affected impact?** |  |
| **Are you collecting your data in a way that will allow you to assess how well you have reached and influenced key subgroups of your audience?**  For example, for disabled people it is important to break down by impairment. |  |

## Annex 1: Key facts and figures

To help you decide whether your communication is relevant to the above audiences, here are some statistics on these key audience groups and a range of issues relevant to these audiences (April 2020):

* **Disability:** 
  + 22% of the UK population has a disability, this includes people who are blind or partially sighted, deaf or hard of hearing, autistic, dyspraxic, physical disabilities, have mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder, or long-term health conditions such as cancer and HIV patients.
  + Many people with learning disabilities have a lower comprehension rate than the general population (National Reading age is 9).
  + Disabled people are less likely to be able to make use of the internet to keep up to date with changes in Government policy, keep in touch with friends/ family or use online shopping. The proportion of recent internet users in 2019[[1]](#footnote-1) remained significantly lower for adults who were disabled(78%) compared with those who were not disabled (95%). This becomes greater in the older age groups: adults aged 75 years and over, 41% of disabled adults and 54% of non-disabled adults were recent internet users.
  + Disabled people are more vulnerable to crime[[2]](#footnote-2). In March 2019 almost 1 in 4 (23.1%) disabled adults aged 16 years and over experienced crime (including fraud and computer misuse), compared with 1 in 5 (20.7%) non-disabled adults.
  + Disabled people have higher living costs compared to non-disabled people. They are more likely to be in food poverty than non-disabled people. In 2016 an average of 12.5% of disabled people aged 16-64 were considered to be in food poverty with just 4.1% ofnon-disabled people.
* **Transgender:** The government estimates there are between 200,000-500,000 trans people in the UK[[3]](#footnote-3). Discrimination towards this group in health services and wider society is widely reported.
* **LGB**: The proportion identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) was 2.2% in 2018. In 2018, there were an estimated 1.2 million people aged 16 years and over identifying as LGB.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* **Sex and gender:** 51% of the UK population is made up of women.Women form the majority of older people in the UK (57% of over 65s). Women make up 77% of NHS workers in total, 45% of hospital and community health service doctors and 89% of nurses and health visitors in the NHS. Around half of women work in education, health and retail. Women are more likely to be carers for children and older relatives and have anxiety and depression.
* **Young women**: Women aged 17 to 19 are over three times as likely to have an anxiety disorder as men of the same age.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* **Pregnant women and new mothers:** There are around 700,000 births in the UK each year.[[6]](#footnote-6) Women suffer discrimination and intimidation during their pregancy and as new mothers, for example for breastfeeding in public. Discriminating against women in the workplace because they are pregnant or new mothers is unlawful and there are regulations in place which every employer must follow.
* **Race and ethnicity**: 1.6% of the population of England and Wales reported at the 2011 census that they either could not speak English at all or not well, this accounts for 864,000 people.[[7]](#footnote-7) Between the financial year ending 2016 and financial year ending 2018 children in Bangladeshi and Pakistani households were the most likely to live in low income and material deprivation out of all ethnic groups, while children in Indian households were the least likely.
* **Employment**: Women are over three times more likely to work part-time than men[[8]](#footnote-8). Women tend to work in lower paid sectors and lower paid roles[[9]](#footnote-9). Over half of all UK women work in the health, education and retail sectors.[[10]](#footnote-10) Between 2014 and 2018, 17% of people living in Asian and Other ethnic group households had a persistent low income (before accounting for housing costs, like rent) , the highest percentages out of all ethnic groups in the United Kingdom. In 2018, 20.4% of workers in the combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic group were self-employed, the highest percentage out of all ethnic groups. Black people had the highest unemployment rate out of all the ethnic groups (9%). Women aged 55 to 64 are almost 20% less likely to have a private pension, and those who do have almost 40% less wealth held in them[[11]](#footnote-11).
* **Domestic violence**: Between April 2018 and March 2019, 5.7% of people aged 16 to 74 in England and Wales reported having been a victim of domestic abuse in the last 12 months. People of Mixed ethnicity (12.9%) were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse than White (5.6%) or Asian people (3.8%). In the Mixed and White ethnic groups, women were more likely than men to have experienced domestic abuse in the past year. Around 1 in 7 (14.1%) disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2019, compared with 1 in 20 (5.4%) non-disabled adults.
* **Education**: In 2018/19 pupils from the White Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller ethnic groups had the lowest average scores for “Attainment 8” (which measures pupils’ performance in 8 GCSE-level qualifications). Pupils from the Chinese, Asian and Mixed ethnic groups scored higher than average for Attainment 8 , while White pupils and Black pupils scored lower than average.[[12]](#footnote-12) In 2017/18, 5.1% of Black students got 3 A grades or better, the lowest percentage out of the 6 broad ethnic groups. Girls tend to outperform boys in STEM subjects at GCSE[[13]](#footnote-13). Despite this, male students are almost twice as likely to take maths at A Level, over four times more likely to take physics and over eight times more likely to take computer science.[[14]](#footnote-14)
* **Living conditions**: In 2014 to 2017, around 679,000 (3%) of the estimated 23 million households in England were overcrowded (that is, they had fewer bedrooms than they needed to avoid undesirable sharing); around 2% of White British households experienced overcrowding, compared with 30% of Bangladeshi households (the highest percentage)[[15]](#footnote-15). In the 2 years to March 2018, an average of 4% of households in England had damp in at least one room of their home (871,000 homes). Bangladeshi and Black African households were more likely to have damp problems than White British households[[16]](#footnote-16).

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## Annex 2: Further resources

The Government Equalities Office has access to statistics across a range of issues and audiences which may be useful for communications planning. Should you need some support, contact: [**geocommunications@cabinetoffice.gov.uk**](mailto:geocommunications@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

* **Simplifying language**:   
  You can use [Hemingway Editor](http://www.hemingwayapp.com/) to help you
* **Gender specific strategic communications:** <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c6bd7bae5274a72bc452400/498_Gender_Sensitive_Strategic_Communications.pdf>
* **Accessible online information for blind and partially sighted people:**
  + It is advisable to avoid PDFs and if material is online, then it should be in HTML - this is especially important for people who use screen readers <https://www.rnib.org.uk/campaigning/priority-campaigns/accessible-health-information/coronavirus-and-accessible-online-information>
  + Colour contrast guidance   
    <https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/06/17/colour-contrast-why-does-it-matter/>
  + Colour vision deficiency NHS guidance   
    <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/colour-vision-deficiency/>
* **Gendered language**   
  Search online for gendered language bias or reducing gendered language. Language suggesting competition can be seen as masculine and discourage women from engaging (e.g. dominant or leader). Conversely, language such as ‘caring’ or ‘warm’ can be seen as feminine and discouraging to men. *Examples of tools which help with language in job adverts include* [*http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/*](http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/) *and* [*https://textanalysis.beapplied.com/*](https://textanalysis.beapplied.com/)
* **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines:** <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/helping-people-to-use-your-service/understanding-wcag>
* **GDS Service Manual**:   
  [Learning about users and their needs,](https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/user-research/start-by-learning-user-needs) [Researching emotionally sensitive subjects](https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/user-research/researching-emotionally-sensitive-subjects) and [Running research sessions with people with disabilities](https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/user-research/running-research-sessions-with-people-with-disabilities)
* **Government content and publishing**:   
  [Images and videos](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-publish-on-gov-uk/images-and-videos) and [Publishing accessible documents](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-publish-on-gov-uk/accessible-pdfs)

1. [Internet users, UK](https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Disability and crime, UK](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/bulletins/disabilityandcrimeuk/2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721642/GEO-LGBT-factsheet.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2018> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. NHS Digital, 2018. Mental Health of Children and Young People in England: 2017, Emotional disorders in 5 to 19 year olds – Data Tables, table 1, [https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/ statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2017/2017#resources](https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2018> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/english-language-skills/latest> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ONS, 2019. Labour market statistics: May 2019, Table EMP01 SA. [https://www.ons.gov.uk/ employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/ may2019](https://www.ons.gov.uk/) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. N. Cominetti, K Henehan and S. Clarke (2019), Low Pay Britain 2019. Resolution Foundation [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821890/GEO_GEEE_Strategy_Problem_Analysis_Rev_2__1_.pdf> (p. 6) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Office for National Statistics (2018), Wealth and Assets Survey, 2014-16: Table 6.10. [https://www.ons. gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/datasets/ pensionwealthwealthingreatbritain](https://www.ons.) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Department for Education, 2019. Key stage 4 performance 2019 (revised), Table CH1, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2019-revised> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Department for Education, 2018. GCSE and equivalent results: 2017 to 2018 (provisional), Table S2b, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/gcse-and-equivalent-results-2017-to-2018-provisional.> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Department for Education, 2019. A level and other 16 to 18 results (revised): 2017/18, Table 11b, [https:// www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results-2017-to-2018-revised](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results-2017-to-2018-revised) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018. English Housing Survey. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/housing-conditions/overcrowded-households/latest> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019. English Housing Survey. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/housing-conditions/housing-with-damp-problems/latest> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)