

Kingston Council **style** guide



Further **advice** If you have any queries or need any advice, contact
the Communications Group on **020 8547 4614**.

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1. Introduction

Communicating effectively with our residents and stakeholders is a key priority for Kingston Council. Because communications are important to us, we have recently strengthened the communications function within the Council and created a new Communications and Information Services Group.

If we communicate clearly and consistently with residents, it will help them to understand what the Council does – and how to access the services we offer. Research has shown that residents are more likely to report higher satisfaction levels with their local council and its services if they feel well informed.

We want to raise the standard and quality of the Council's publications – from letters and leaflets to brochures

and poster campaigns. We want all our publications to be effective, communicating our services and initiatives in a clear way that is accessible to all.

We also want to improve the consistency of design and to make sure the Council's corporate identity is used correctly. To help us do this, we have established an approved list of designers and printers, and these suppliers should be used for all publicity material.

The aim of this style guide is to set out the corporate standards for all Council publications – and give you practical advice and guidelines for producing publicity material. It is important that the standards and advice set out in this style guide are followed to enable us to raise the quality, consistency and accessibility of all our communications.



Bruce McDonald
Chief Executive

2. Corporate standards for publications

The corporate standards set out below should be followed for all Council publications so that everything we produce is of a consistent high quality. We have designed this style guide to give you a better understanding of communications issues, along with practical advice to help you meet these corporate standards.

- All publications should be written in Plain English, be clearly legible for their audiences and use the recommended typeface, Arial, at no less than 11pt. For specific audiences who may have visual impairments, the recommended minimum size is 14pt.
- The Council's approved list of designers and printers (see Appendix 1) should be used to produce all Council publicity material to ensure consistent standards and the correct use of corporate identity.
- The Council has a policy of using recycled paper for all publications. The Council's approved list of designers and printers will help select appropriate recycled paper. The recycled paper logo should also be used (eg on back cover).
- All corporate publications should use the Council's corporate colour (Pantone green 349 U/C) predominately, but not exclusively.
- Any images used must be of a high quality. Do not use free downloadable clip art from the internet.
- All Council publications should be accessible for minority audiences, eg people with visual impairments or people whose first language is not English. As a minimum standard, all publications should carry the following line clearly and prominently (eg near contact details or inside front cover):

'If you require this document in another language or an alternative format such as large print or audio-tape, please contact the Council's helpline on 020 8547 5757.'
- All publications should be available as a PDF file for use on the Council's website.
- Full contact details of the relevant department, including the Council's website address, should be displayed clearly on all publications.
- All publicity material should include a publication date (eg on back cover).
- A copy of all external publications should be sent to the Communications Group – press.comms@rbk.kingston.gov.uk – or Room 54, Guildhall, Kingston upon Thames KT1 1EU.

Further advice

If you have any queries or need any advice, contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614 or email press.comms@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

3. Planning publicity

Leaflets, newsletters, posters, flyers or any other form of printed communication material can help spread your message and support a wider campaign. Before deciding to produce publicity material, you need to consider the following:

Purpose

Be clear about why the material is needed. New publicity material will be needed only if: it doesn't already exist, the old material is out of date, is ineffective or doesn't meet the needs of the intended audiences. New material will also be needed to publicise new services, initiatives or specific events.

Aim

Be clear about the aim of the material. Are you trying to raise awareness of Council services, initiatives, events or issues? Are you trying to encourage a response or action? If the publicity material is part of a wider campaign, see Running a campaign on p7.

Audience

Consider your target audience(s) and the best ways to reach them. For example, is the information for a wide general audience or targeting a specific group of service users? Ensure you choose a format or formats appropriate for the intended audiences and that they are written and designed in a way to meet the needs of those audiences. For more information, see Increasing accessibility on p15.

Budget

Remember, publicity materials have inherent costs: copywriting, photography, design, print and distribution. It is important to consider the best use of printed material before

you commit yourself to a significant cost. For example, do you need to use full colour – two colours can be just as effective and cost less.

Distribution

Consider how you are going to distribute the material to the target audience before you produce it. It is a waste of your time and the Council's money if it does not reach the intended audience. Think about numbers required and the shelf life of the material – it is cheaper to print in bulk than order another reprint a few months later.

Timescales

Give yourself plenty of preparation time and work out deadlines in advance. Build in time for each element: writing, clearances, design, proof reading, amendments, print and distribution.

Evaluation

How effective is your publicity material? To help evaluate, you could simply ask people where they heard about the service/event when they telephone or turn up and register the responses (eg leaflet, poster, advert in local newspaper, listing in Livin' Kingston, website etc). The results may show that one method is more effective for your audience.

For some key publications targeted at specific audiences, it might be worth running a focus group with service user groups. This is particularly useful if you want to find out how to update and improve a key document to meet the needs of your target audience. Involving users in the preparation of the document will also give them a greater sense of ownership.

Top Tips – Key information

Think through the information from the audience's point of view before you start writing. What will they want/need to know? Ensure that key information is clearly organised and displayed on all publicity material.

You should include:

- title and RBK logo
- who the information is for
- clear signposting – use subheadings to help organise the information clearly; larger documents may need contents lists and chapter headings
- clear details of the initiative, event or service, and how to access it
- any specific dates, times, venues or costs
- clear follow-up contact information for the service/department (include telephone, minicom, email and website addresses)
- how to obtain the information in another format or language.
- recycled paper logo and publication date.

Publicity material

Consider the pros and cons of various forms of publication before deciding on the best format to reach your target audience(s):

Leaflets

Leaflets can be used in many ways. They can be left in specific locations to be picked up, but this is a very passive approach. They can also be posted direct to target groups, distributed through schools or handed out in the street.

- Pro – leaflets are fairly cheap to produce and can be used in several ways
- Con – they are very disposable.

Brochures

Brochures are a more expensive, detailed publication, for distribution to an interested audience. Brochures are justifiable if they are promoting a major scheme.

- Pro – brochures can look very professional and add prestige to a project
- Con – they are expensive and time-consuming to produce.

Booklets

For information that is not going to change for some time, it is sometimes appropriate to produce a standing document that is available to interested people at their request.

- Pro – booklets can carry a great deal of information and offer a point of reference

- Con – they are not suitable for short-term campaigns and, once published, cannot be updated without a full reprint at great cost.

Posters

A creative, eye-catching poster campaign can be very effective. While posters can only carry a limited amount of written information, a strong design can be supported with a media campaign.

- Pro – a good poster campaign will reach a lot of people and can create media interest
- Con – they require a commitment of time and resources.

Newsletters

Be very careful about newsletters, whether for an internal or external audience. The Council already publishes *Livin' Kingston* which is distributed to all residents four times a year and *Staff Update* and the Intranet for employees. Additional newsletters might confuse the Council's messages and identity.

- Pro – newsletters are a good way of communicating a large amount of information
- Con – they require a commitment of time and resources.

Livin' Kingston

Launched in June 2004, the Council's magazine is already proving very popular with residents. It is distributed quarterly to all homes in the borough and is available in all Council receptions, libraries, leisure centres and some supermarkets.

- Pro – a good way to promote your event or service to a wide audience at minimum cost
- Con – the quarterly publication may not tie in with your timescale and the magazine will have a limited shelf life

For more information, contact the editor, Jack Taylor on 020 8547 4614.

Electronic media

While not all residents will have access to electronic media, all new documents should be published on the Council's website as a PDF or text file.

Website guidelines are available on the Council's intranet. For advice on how to link documents, contact the Council's web editor on 020 8547 5171.

Further advice

If you have any queries or need any advice, contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614 or email press.comms@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

4. Running a campaign

A well-organised, focussed campaign can be an effective way to build awareness of Council services, initiatives or issues. They can also be used to encourage a response or action, or change behaviour – for example, to encourage road safety or discourage dog-fouling in public places.

Campaigns are time-consuming and can be expensive and labour-intensive. Before you start a campaign, it is vital to assess whether it is worthwhile. The Communications Group can advise you on this and all aspects of planning a campaign – and will manage any corporate campaigns on your behalf. They can also help with media relations to support your campaign.

If you are planning a campaign for a specific service, there are some basic principles to follow:

- **Set clear goals.** To justify the time, money and energy involved, think about what you're trying to achieve. A campaign without a clear, measurable aim and defined structure will lack focus and momentum. Include benchmarks to judge success and build in targets. If you can't measure it, don't do it.
- **Develop an action plan.** Include timescales, key actions, resources required and lead officers.
- **Be creative.** The best campaigns capture the public imagination. The Communications Group can help with ideas and suggest the best range of communication tools to use.
- **Make sure you have the staff to carry out the campaign.** Also ensure that there is capacity to deal with an upsurge in demand for a particular service after your campaign.
- **Make sure the campaign stays 'on message'.** Keep your campaign within the Council's overall corporate objectives and identity. Campaigns often result in new slogans and logos, which can confuse the audience and lose the link to the Council.
- **Don't forget the internal audience.** Always fully brief key employees and members before you launch your campaign. The briefing should include the objectives and key messages of your campaign. Kingston Council employs over two thousand staff, all of whom can be your ambassadors to people that they meet if they are enthusiastic about a campaign, or assassins if they are not.

Further advice

If you have any queries or need any advice, contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614 or email press.comms@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

5. Corporate identity

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames has a strong brand which we want to maintain. An important visual aspect of that brand is the Council's corporate identity. The correct and consistent use of the logo on all publications, signage and vehicle livery is important. We want local residents and businesses to be able to instantly recognise that a particular service, publication or vehicle is representing Kingston Council.

These guidelines set out the correct use of the Council's logo to be used on the front of all Council publications, letterheads, posters, flyers, websites, advertisements, powerpoint presentations etc.

The Council has an approved list of designers and printers (see Appendix 1 for contact details) who will help ensure all departments use the corporate identity correctly. These approved suppliers have sets of the Council's logo along with full corporate identity guidelines and are aware of our corporate standards for publications.

Use of the RBK logo

Colour

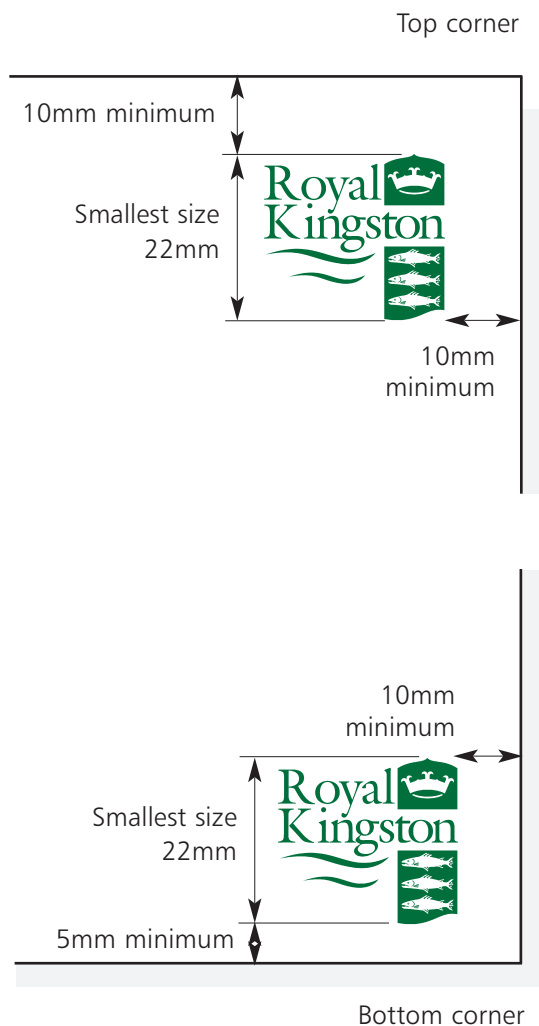
- The logo colour is Pantone 349 U/C (C100 M0 Y83 K47). No other green may be used for the logo.
- If working with one colour only, the logo can be used in black.
- The white version of the logo should only be used when the green or black version would not be clearly visible (eg on a dark background).

- The logo should not be boxed, distorted or altered in any way.



Position

The Council logo should be used on the RIGHT hand side (top or bottom) on the front cover of all publications.



Height of the logo

(landscape and portrait)

Minimum sizes

A5 22mm	A2 65mm
A4 30mm	A1 90mm
A3 50mm	A0 145mm

Additional logos

- Departmental logos should not be used in addition to (or instead of) the Council's logo.
- The logos of partner organisations may be used if appropriate (ensuring they are also used correctly and relative to the height of the Council's logo).
- If you have any queries about the use of additional logos, please contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614.

Guidance for letters, emails, signage etc

Letters

The approved way of setting out letters is available as a template on the Council's intranet. Do not attempt to re-create stationery (letter-headed paper, compliments slips, business cards etc), but use the templates provided.

When writing letters to the public, use Arial 12 point typeface and align the text left. Include full contact details to give recipients a choice of methods for contacting you, including: phone (direct dial), fax, minicom, mobile phone numbers where appropriate and email and website addresses.

Underwrite any signatures with a clear, typed version.

Use black type on white paper – any other colour weakens the overall image and may be hard to read for people with visual impairments.

Ensure letters are clear and concise – see sections on Clear Print on p15 and Plain English on p18.

The following statement should appear on the bottom of all letters:

'If this letter is not clear, please post it to: FREEPOST RBK BETTER LETTERS or ring 020 8547 5757.'

Emails

All emails should contain the sender's name, job title, department, telephone number and email address as standard. Use the same guidance for letters on writing style, typeface and colours. For disclaimers and personal email use guidance, see the section on the Council's intranet.

Internal publications

As a basic minimum, internal publications should include the issue date/number and contact details. To make your internal publications more effective, follow the guidance in Planning Publicity on p4.

Posters

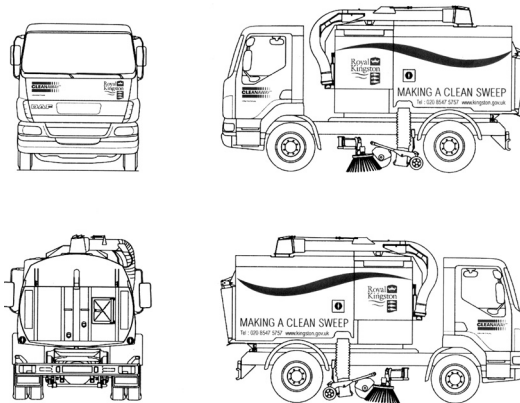
All posters should follow the guidance in this style guide. Town centre posters (JC Decaux boards) are subject to editorial clearance by the Head of Strategic Services.

Recruitment advertising

Recruitment advertising should follow the guidance in this style guide. For advice, contact Garrey Blackwood in Human Resources on 020 8547 5167.

Signage and vehicle livery

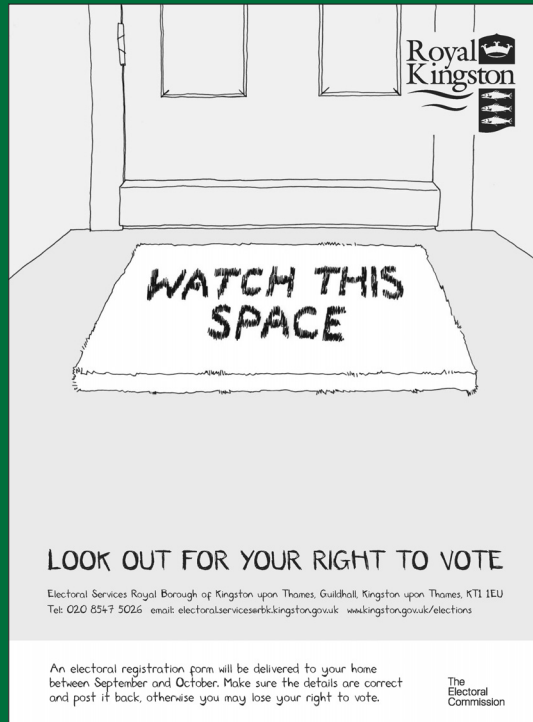
All signage and vehicle livery should follow the principles of this style guide. For advice, contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614.



Further advice

Letter templates, website guidelines, email and intranet procedures are all available on the Council's intranet.

If you have any queries or need any advice on corporate identity, contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614 or email press.comms@rbk.kingston.gov.uk.



A3 Poster



Signage

6. Commissioning design, print and photography

In order to raise the standard of all Council publications and give a more consistent image, look and feel, we have established an approved list of designers and printers who should be used for all Council publications.

The approved list of designers and printers will help ensure that the Council's corporate identity is used correctly on all publications. They are also aware of the Council's corporate standards – see p3.

Contact details for the approved list of designers and printers are in Appendix 1.

When commissioning design and print:

- you should get at least two quotes for any design and print work
- you should get at least three quotes for jobs costing £3,000 – £10,000
- any work over £10,000 is subject to a formal advertising/tender process.

For advice on formal tendering, contact Rachel Willsher in Strategic Services on 020 8547 5177.

Preparing the brief

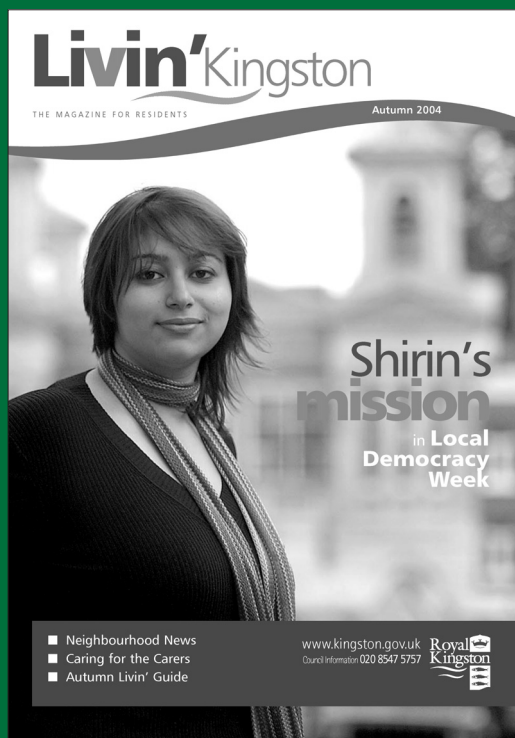
Designers

When briefing designers, remember that you are paying for their creative expertise, so describe clearly what you are trying to achieve and allow them to come up with the details of the design.

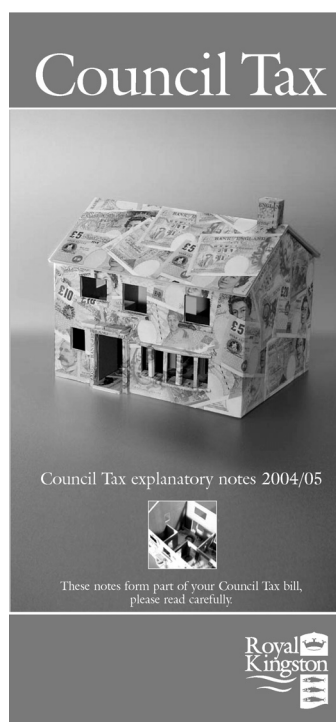
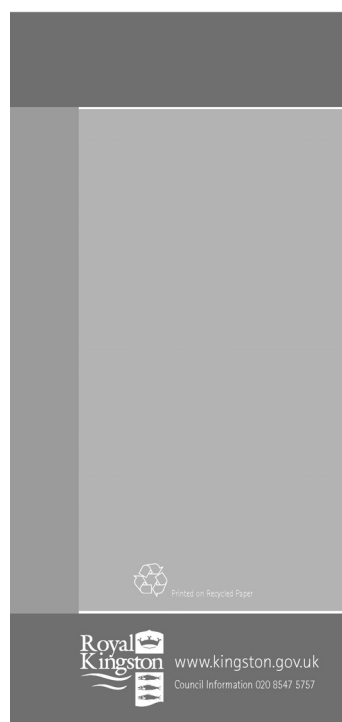
For quote purposes, they will also need to know the format (eg A4), colours (eg two colour or full colour), the print quantity (eg 1,000) and an idea of the number of pages and approximate number of images to be used.

Things to remember:

- Stick to your budget. Tell the designer what you can afford and ask what they can produce for that money.
- Allow enough time for the designers to do their work and for any corrections or alterations that you might need to make (plus time for printing and distribution) in planning your publicity.
- All new documents should be made available on the Council's website as a PDF (Portable Document Format) so include this in your design/print specification.
- Send them the finished (and cleared) text, if possible. Rewriting or editing text once the designer has started work will make the process longer and more costly.
- Always proof-read text thoroughly. It is not the designer's job to check your copy for mistakes. That said, always proof-read the document when it comes back from the designers, as mistakes can happen at their end too.
- Make sure the designers can easily contact you, or a deputy. Don't commission design and go on holiday unless someone else can take decisions for you!



Branding on the Council's magazine



Council Tax booklet

Printing

- The Council's approved list of designers and printers will help select appropriate recycled paper. The recycled paper logo should also be used (eg on back cover).
- Make sure you order enough copies to meet the demand. Ordering one large print run will be cheaper than ordering two or three smaller batches.

Photography

To maintain a high quality feel to publications, good images are very important. Do not use photographs of poor quality or that have been used in many previous publications. Do not use clip art from the internet. The Communications Group can supply you with details of good photographers to suit your budget.

When briefing photographers, make sure you make the most of their professional skills. If you end up with a photo you could have taken yourself with a digital camera, you have wasted your money!

Consider:

- The angle of your shot – try to avoid direct, front-on photographs and go for more interesting angles.
- Human interest – take photos that feature people, not just places and avoid 'line-up' shots of people. The media are more likely to use photos that include local residents or service users rather than pictures of Council officers and members.

- Try to encourage photographs that represent the diversity of the community where possible, rather than just one community group.
- Ensure that the photographer has photo release forms (available on the intranet or from the Communications Group) that can be signed by the subjects of the photo shoot if they are not members or officers. This is vital for young children, where the release form should be signed by a parent or teacher.

Photographs are often used more than once and, without prior written consent, can result in great embarrassment or even legal action against the Council.

- If you want to caption pictures, ensure you (or the photographer) take any names of subjects (spelt correctly) and in the right order (eg left to right in the picture).

Further advice

If you have any queries or need any advice, contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614 or email press.comms@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

7. Increasing accessibility

Recognising diversity

We are proud of our diverse borough and we value every resident. In terms of our communications, this means going the extra mile to ensure that all our customers are able to access the information they need from the Council.

In order to make our information accessible, we might need to provide it in alternative formats, such as large print or audio-tape, or in other languages. As a minimum standard, all publications should carry the following standard line clearly in a prominent place (eg near contact details or inside front cover):

'If you require this document in another language or an alternative format such as large print or audio-tape, please contact the Council's helpline on 020 8547 5757.'

For some specific audiences, for example, people with visual impairments or learning difficulties, information should be prepared in a format which is appropriate for that audience – and in consultation with service user groups.

Clear print

You can immediately make your publication more accessible by following these clear print guidelines. Many people, not just those who are registered with a visual impairment,

will benefit from clear print. For example, people with low levels of literacy, people with learning difficulties and people who do not have English as a first language might all find a document easier to understand if the layout is clear and uncluttered.

Consider the following checklist when you write your document:

- use a 'sans serif' font like Arial, which is easier to read because it has a simple design
- use double or one and a half spacing between each line
- use 12 point type size for body text (11pt Council minimum)
- print on non-glossy paper
- don't indent paragraphs
- avoid hyphens and splitting words over two lines
- align text to the left
- leave plenty of space between columns in tables
- use good colour contrast – black or dark blue on white or yellow pages – no background colour or graphics behind the text
- keep the layout simple
- keep all images clear
- avoid italics and capitals
- don't underline
- don't use lots of different fonts.

Language

Ensure you use appropriate language for your audience and write from the reader's point of view. Explain services, eligibility criteria and how to access services clearly. See Plain English p18.

Images

Ensure any photographs and images you use are clearly visible. Photographs should have good contrast and not be distorted in any way. Do not use text over images.

Make sure the photographs are representative of all the target audiences/community and do not stereotype.

Translations

Compared to other London boroughs, we have a relatively small black and minority ethnic population (15.5 per cent). Whilst it may not be cost-effective to print up versions of every publication in other languages, we still need to offer documents in other languages to ensure they are accessible to the whole population.

The Council can provide translations of any documents as well as interpreters for events. For further advice contact Barbara Morton, Translations Co-ordinator on 020 8547 5818.

As a minimum standard, all publications should carry the line:

'If you require this document in another language or an alternative format such as large print or audio-tape, please contact the Council's helpline on 020 8547 5757.'

People with visual impairments

There are over one million blind and visually impaired people in the UK. They use three main methods of receiving information originally produced in printed form, in addition to the telephone and face-to-face contact. These are large print, audio and Braille (which is only read by four per cent of people with a visual impairment).

There are also increasing numbers of people using computers and other technology to 'read' information for them – which is another good reason why we are making all documents available on the Council's website. The web editor can advise you on making documents accessible in large print via the website.

In addition to following the clear print guidelines, all Council publications should publicise that these alternative formats are available to customers by using the standard line (see left). If you need advice on formats for information specifically aimed at people with visual impairments, contact Barbara Morton, Translations Co-ordinator on 020 8547 5818.

Audio-tape

If you need to create audio-tape versions of your document, contact Barbara Morton, Translations Co-ordinator on 020 8547 5818.

Large print

We recommend Arial 18 point for headings and 16 point for body text. If you are increasing the font size on an existing document, remember to check the formatting afterwards, as this will be affected by the size increase.

Top Tips – Increasing accessibility

- Use Plain English
- Follow the clear print guidelines
- Organise the information clearly with good signposting (headings etc)
- Write from the audience's point of view
- Do not offend, patronise or stereotype in words or images
- Make sure images are clear and reflective of target audiences
- Include minicom and fax numbers in with your contact details (useful for people with hearing impairments)
- Take advice on appropriate formats
- Make the document available on the web
- As a minimum standard, all publications should carry the line:

'If you require this document in another language or an alternative format such as large print or audio-tape, please contact the Council's helpline on 020 8547 5757.'

Further advice

For information and advice on translations and alternative formats, contact Barbara Morton, Translations Co-ordinator on 020 8547 5818.

For further information or advice, contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614 or email press.comms@rbk.kingston.gov.uk.

8. Plain English

All Council publications should be written in plain English. Plain English is not about patronising the reader or over-simplifying the message, but about writing in a clear and concise way – and always with the reader in mind.

It is important to remember that your document will either give a good or bad impression of the Council. If it is carelessly written, the reader might see the document as hard to understand, full of jargon, patronising or aggressive. On the other hand, if you write it well, the reader will think it is clear, understandable and polite.

The Council's Handy Guide to Plain English, produced in association with the better letters campaign, gives some guidance on clarity and simplicity when choosing words. It is always better to use a simple, commonly-used word, instead of more formal language.

For example,

Use:	Instead of:
to	for the purpose of
use	utilise
rule	regulation
legal	statutory
try	endeavour
wrong	erroneous
help	assist, facilitate
stop	discontinue
talk to	liaise

Top Tips – Plain English

- Don't use jargon
- Don't use abbreviations without spelling them out in full first.
- Keep sentences short (15-20 words max)
- Use short punchy paragraphs (three or four sentences) dealing with one issue at a time
- Break up long chunks of text with sub-headings and bullet points
- Ask: is this clear, concise, does it have the reader in mind?
- Always get a colleague to check what you have written.

Further **advice**

The RBK Handy Guide to Plain English is available on the Council's intranet or from Rachel Willsher on 020 8547 5177.

Plain English Campaign:
www.plainenglish.co.uk

For further information or advice, contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614 or email press.comms@rbk.kingston.gov.uk.

9. House style and grammar guide

Every document that the Council produces should be spelt correctly and free from grammatical errors. Sloppy punctuation or poor spelling reflects very badly on the entire Council, may well result in complaints and could even end up being ridiculed in the press.

Always ask a colleague to check what you have written. Do not rely on the computer spell checker as this is not foolproof.

The following A-Z guidelines should answer most of the common questions about grammar, punctuation and writing style.

Abbreviations and acronyms

If you are referring to an organisation more than once, put the abbreviation in brackets after the full name the first time you use it – then you can use the abbreviated form. For example:

- 'Transport for London (TfL) guidelines are available. Contact TfL directly for your copy.'

Full stops are not used after abbreviations such as: MP, Mr, Ms, Dr, St, Cllr, am, pm, 1st, 2nd, cm, kg, eg

In addresses, spell out Road, Street, Avenue in full and with a capital letter.

Active vs passive

Active statements are strong and dynamic: they suggest action. Passive statements are distant and take away responsibility. Try to use active statements wherever possible.

- 'Kingston Council designed the scheme...' is active;

- 'The scheme was designed by Kingston Council...' is passive.

Age

Specify ages with caution – it sometimes offends. Say 'older people', not 'the elderly'.

Apostrophes (')

An apostrophe:

- denotes possession (eg 'the Council's strategy')
- replaces a missing letter or letters, (eg have not = 'haven't')

You should avoid missing letters if you are writing a deliberately formal document, otherwise they are fine to use.

Do not use apostrophes to denote more than one:

- 'The Council has bought a thousand new PCs' (not PC's)

The word 'its' only has an apostrophe if it is short for 'it is' or 'it has' – and never has an apostrophe when it means 'belonging to it'.

Bullet points

These help the reader to understand the main points of your text.

- the introductory line should be followed by a colon
- each bullet point should normally read as a continuation of the introductory line
- capital letters are not normally used at the start of each bullet point
- full stops are only used after the last bullet point.

Capital letters

There is a tendency to overuse capital letters. Capitals should be used for proper nouns, such as names of people, organisations or titles.

For example, if you are writing about the Government, it takes a capital.

If you are writing about a government bill, it doesn't.

Use capital letters for days of the week and months of the year – but not for seasons. Capitals should not be used for north, south etc unless part of a name eg South Africa.

Whether you capitalise a word or not, ensure that you are consistent throughout the document.

Collectives

Where a group of people are represented by one word, such as 'Parliament, 'team' or 'council', they generally take a singular verb. For example:

- 'Parliament is sitting'
- 'the Council has decided'

When referring to individual members of a collective group, use the plural:

- 'The cabinet were unable to agree with each other'

There are exceptions – some groups, such as people, police and clergy take the plural:

- 'The police are delighted with the results'

Comma rules

As a guide, commas should be in places where, if you were reading aloud, it would be natural to pause and take a breath.

Never join two sentences with a comma: use a full stop, or a semicolon (;) if the two sentences are closely linked.

Lists are separated with commas. But if the list already contains commas, use a semicolon (;) to separate the items:

- 'He checked the paintwork, glass, electrics and chassis'
- 'He checked the paintwork, which was uneven; glass, which was cracked; electrics, which were faulty and chassis, which was rusty.'

Don't use a comma before 'and'.

Council

The name of the borough is The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (without hyphens). Within publications, we can also be referred to as (the) Royal Borough or Kingston Council.

The house style is to use upper case 'C' for 'the Council' (referring to RBK), and lower case for any other council. 'The borough' refers to the place, not the authority.

Councillors

Use the title Councillor followed by the full name eg Councillor Adrian Other. Try to avoid the abbreviated 'Cllr' where possible. Unless you are referring to a particular councillor, use councillor with a lower case 'c'.

Dates

Write dates in a consistent format: number, month and year:

- 12 March 2004 (not March 12 2004)

Spell out decades – eg the eighties, not 80s. Centuries should be written as eighteenth century.

Do not use terms that can quickly become out of date, such as 'next month'. A document may have a shelf life of several months or even years, so say 'from 1 October 2005' and not just 'from 1 October'.

Disabilities – phraseology

Use:

- 'disabled people', not 'the disabled' or 'the handicapped'
- 'impairment', not 'handicap' or 'disability'
- 'requires significant personal assistance' not 'severely disabled'
- 'person with...' or 'living with...' (condition), not 'suffering from/afflicted by...'
- 'wheelchair user', not 'wheelchair bound'
- 'blind people', not 'the blind'; 'visually impaired', not 'partially sighted'
- 'deaf people', not 'the deaf'; 'a person who is profoundly deaf', not 'deaf and dumb'
- 'a person who has epilepsy', not 'epileptic'
- 'a person with learning difficulties', not 'mentally handicapped'
- '...living with a mental health issue', not 'mentally ill'
- 'supported and assisted by...', not 'looked after by...'
- 'parking for Blue Badge holders', not 'disabled parking bays'
- don't say 'disabled toilets' – they are either accessible or inaccessible

- state specific requirements rather than use 'special needs'.

Figures

General rules are:

- one to ten in words, then 11 onwards in figures
- spell out numbers if they begin a sentence eg Fourteen books were on the table
- figures with units of measure eg 7 miles, 2 hours. But: 'There are thousands of unemployed people'
- figures for money – £1.50, use words after one million: £1.5 million
- spell out fractions – eg 'one third'.

Gender and sexuality phraseology

Use 'women', not 'ladies', unless you are opening a speech with 'ladies and gentlemen'. Refer to the chair rather than chairman or chairwoman.

Avoid over-use of the clumsy phrase 'he or she' or 'he/she'. Instead, refer to residents in the plural, or address them personally. For example:

- 'If residents wish to register, they should write to the Council.'
- 'If you want to register, write to the Council.'

Use the term 'lone parents' instead of 'single mothers' or 'single parents'.

Write 'lesbians and gay men' not 'gays' or 'homosexuals'.

Latin

Don't use Latin if you can find a substitute: 'about' for 'circa', 'annually' for 'per annum', 'among others' for 'inter alia'.

Quotes, quotation marks, reporting speech

Use double quotes (“ ”) to report what someone said with punctuation as follows:

- He said: “This scheme has my full support.”
- “I discovered that this approach saved a great deal of time and money,” she explained.

Use single quotes for quotations within speech:

- She said: “To quote from Shakespeare: ‘I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.’”

If a quote takes up more than a paragraph, start each new paragraph with opening quotation marks, but only use closing quotation marks to end the whole quote.

Per cent

Write it as two words and try to avoid the use of the % symbol in sentences. Proportions are generally more easily understood than percentages.

‘One in ten’ is preferable to ‘ten per cent’; ‘three out of four’ or ‘three quarters’ is more easily understood than ‘75 per cent’.

Race and nationality phraseology

Use:

- ‘black people’, not ‘blacks’. ‘Irish people’, not ‘the Irish’.
- ‘African Caribbean’, not ‘Afro-Caribbean’ or ‘West Indian’
- ‘dual heritage’, not ‘mixed race’ or ‘half caste’.

Always try to be specific when speaking about particular nationalities, rather than use broad terms such as ‘Asians’ or ‘Eastern Europeans’.

Spellcheckers

Some spell-checkers on computers are American and may reject correct UK spellings or try to replace them with Americanised versions. If in doubt, check with an English dictionary.

Spellcheckers will only pick up misspellings, so writing ‘an’ instead of ‘and’ will not be picked up by the spellchecker.

Slang

Always avoid slang words or spellings (text message style for example), unless you are deliberately adopting this style for a specific campaign.

Telephone numbers

Telephone numbers should be written as 020 8547 1234 with that spacing and should be direct dial numbers wherever possible.

Time

Use am and pm with figures. Don’t put a space between the figures and the letters:

- 9am to 5pm; 10.30am to 5.00pm.

Write midday as 12 noon and midnight as 12 midnight. Avoid using the 24-hour clock.

Further advice

For further information or advice, contact the Communications Group on 020 8547 4614 or email press.comms@rbk.kingston.gov.uk



Produced by the Communications and Information Services Group, October 2004