

## **Communicating with hard to reach groups and accessible formats**

Providing accessible communications for audiences that might be harder to reach continues to be a priority for the Welsh Government.

We are already acting on lessons learned as part of our communications approach to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Keep Wales Safe campaign, Test, Trace, Protect and the Wales Workforce Risk Assessment Tool have all been shaped by insight we have gathered over the past few months and will continue to be as we move forwards.

Our Accessible Communications Group has also been essential in helping us gather this insight, understanding the areas where we need to improve and advising us on some of the best ways in which we can make those improvements.

### **Background**

In June, the Welsh Government started to work with a number of organisations that represent people across Wales with a number of specific communications needs. They formed the 'Accessible Communications Group', which is working to

- understand whether coronavirus communications are meeting the needs of people across Wales
- put in place an improved approach from the Welsh Government so that it provides provide more accessible communications for people in Wales on the coronavirus pandemic

A number of organisations are part of the group:

- Children in Wales
- Children's Commissioner's Office
- British Deaf Association
- Wales Council for Deaf People
- Action on Hearing Loss
- Welsh Refugee Council
- Wales Council for the Blind
- National Autistic Society Cymru
- Learning Disability Wales
- WLGA (National Autism Team)
- Disability Wales
- Age Cymru
- Romani Arts
- TGP Cymru

The group met on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of June.

From the conversations held, it is clear that the Welsh Government can work more closely with the organisations above to make information more accessible for different groups of people in Wales. They also have a number of existing channels that Welsh Government can support and provide content for.

Many of the group's recommendations have already been put in place. Details of recommendations are in Annex A.

We are also putting together a new long-term approach to accessible communications for sign off by the Accessible Communications Group. This will be used to inform the overall approach to other communications activity across the Welsh Government, including communications planned for the Renting Homes Amendment (Wales) Bill.

### **Recent outbreaks**

The recent spike of cases in meat processing plants has shown that we need to create content in a number of languages so we can communicate effectively with everyone in Wales.

We are now translating communications on Keep Wales Safe into 36 languages, including Polish, which has proved important to reaching the workforces in some meat processing plants in Wales. Multilingual Keep Wales Safe leaflets are [available to view and download on our website](#)

### **Test, Trace, Protect**

We are developing further multilingual campaign assets for Test, Trace, Protect and are also working on the launch of the new NHS Covid-19 app - working with UK Government teams on multilingual and diversity stakeholder mapping and developing assets on how to use the app in 11 different languages.

### **Housing campaign activity – non-digital materials**

Alongside our recent housing advice campaign, officials from across Welsh Government worked together to produce a [booklet focusing on financial support for individuals and signposting useful contacts such as Citizens Advice. A support for tenants living in Wales leaflet](#) was also produced which outlined the different benefits that tenants might be able to access. In order to reach the vulnerable who may be digitally excluded they were distributed to housing associations, private landlords and networks such as Anti-Poverty Coalition, the Discretionary Award Fund Partner Network and many others to print and distribute.

We will continue to learn from work on accessible communications that's being carried out within the housing sector, including organisations representing tenants and both social/private landlords.

We are currently working with Citizens Advice Cymru on different campaign materials that will be produced to promote their Private Rented Sector Helpline. This will be a free, confidential, independent service that will advise tenants on ways in which they can maximise their income and manage debt.

### **Across Welsh Government - our work with stakeholders**

We have worked closely with organisations across Wales through the pandemic to co-ordinate and deliver messages, including through our 'Warning and Informing' group, which consists of WLGA, Local Authorities, Police, Fire and Rescue Service, Public Health Wales, British Transport Police, Welsh Ambulance Service, MOD, Natural Resources Wales and Local Resilience Forums.

We continue to work closely with organisations listed above independently and as part of other forums and stakeholder network groups.

**Next steps.**

We will continue to implement changes as a result of lessons learned and build on our work with stakeholders in providing content in languages other than English and Welsh and creating accessible formats as part of any campaign activity around the Renting Homes Amendment (Wales) Bill.

## **Annex A – Accessible Communications Group - Recommendations**

There was universal agreement that Welsh Government can take further steps to meet the needs of those who are deaf or have hearing loss, are older, children, refugees, those with learning disabilities, who are blind or partially sighted, or are from the Roma, gypsy or traveller community.

A summary of the ways that Welsh Government can better meet the needs of these groups can be found below. In all cases, this feedback applies to the key coronavirus communications that are sent out. This includes those on the 21-day reviews led by the First Minister, 'Keep Wales Safe' messaging, shielding, 'Test, Trace, Protect', the use of facemasks, physical distancing advice and any other major announcements or guidance that the majority of people in Wales are being asked to follow during the pandemic.

### **Deaf or suffering from hearing loss**

Over 500,000 people in Wales are hard of hearing. Over 40,000 are profoundly deaf.

There are a number of ways that the Welsh Government can improve its communications with people who are deaf or suffering from hearing loss. Having a live interpreter at public broadcasts is welcome, but there is more that needs to be done. For this group, the Welsh Government should look to provide information in:

- Plain English/Welsh – and use language that reflects the language the deaf community use
- British Sign Language (BSL) in a 'Easy Watch' format - It is important that only accredited NRCPD BSL interpreters are used
- video, using good subtitling

Putting QR codes on letters (such as shielding letters) that link to BSL versions of content would also be helpful. However, not all deaf people are online, so other ways to reach them are important as well.

### **Older people**

Around 28% of the population (more than 600,000 people) in Wales are over the retirement age (according to the last census).

For older people, Welsh Government needs to do everything it can to reach them 'offline'. Less than 50% of over 75's are on the internet or use mobiles for news, so are less likely to get their information from gov.wales or online news / advertising.

To reach older people, Welsh Government should make the best possible use of:

- local newspapers
- posters and flyers (for example in food boxes)
- local communities and sources of information in those communities – such as carers, families, neighbours and GPs

- TV and radio news
- check in and chat services run by charity organisations

## **Children**

Focusing on clear language will help the Welsh Government to get messages to children. Key content needs to be in Plain English/Welsh and easy read should be available.

Children have offline needs as well which need to be met. There are a range of people who will share information with children, with parents and carers an important source of guidance for them.

## **People with learning disabilities**

It is estimated that there are between 15,000 and 60,000 people in Wales with learning disabilities.

For people with learning disabilities, the Welsh Government needs to:

- produce easy read versions of key guidance – this will help, but can be seen as patronising by some autistic people (fine line).
- avoid idioms and metaphors – autistic people can be confused by them, they need clarity rather than ‘rules of thumb’
- consider their offline needs – not all autistic people are online

## **Blind and partially sighted people**

There are around 17,000 people in Wales with sight loss. Most people with sight loss are over 70.

There are a number of ways that the Welsh Government can provide information for people who are blind or partially sighted:

- braille (also vital for deaf-blind people)
- audio
- large print

Many blind or partially sighted people are ‘offline’ so Welsh Government should work creatively on the best means of getting messages to them. Charities who work with blind and partially sighted people also use telephone contact to share information with them and support them.

For this group of people, Welsh Government needs to think about their specific needs in guidance. For example, reopening high streets, non-essential retail and social distancing rules create challenges for this group that need to be covered in guidance.

## **Roma, gypsy and traveller communities**

For Roma, gypsy and traveller communities, reading and writing skills can be limited. Some people in these communities cannot read or write at all. So video and audio content is essential to get messages to them. Face to face contact is also critical, with Local Authority or charity groups visiting to read out important updates to these communities and effective way of sharing messages.