Policy Title	Communications Accessibility Policy
Date of Approval	
Date of Review	4 June 2025

Communications Accessibility Policy

Date of Last Review: 4 June 2025

1. Our Commitment to Accessible Communication

We are committed to creating an inclusive and neuroaffirmative environment for neurodivergent children and their families. This commitment extends to all of our communications ensuring they are accessible, understandable, and welcoming to everyone, regardless of communication preferences. We believe that effective and accessible communication is fundamental to empowering families, building trust, and ensuring that every child can thrive.

2. Guiding Principles

Our communications accessibility is guided by the following principles:

- **Neuroaffirmative:** Our communications use preferred language, avoid ableist or deficit-based terminology and respect diverse communication styles.
- **User-Centred Design:** We prioritise the needs and preferences of neurodivergent children and their families in the design and delivery of our communications.
- **Proactive Accessibility:** We strive to build accessibility into our communications from the outset, rather than as an afterthought.
- **Clear, Concise, and Consistent:** We use plain language, simple sentence structures, and consistent formatting to ensure clarity and ease of understanding.
- **Multiple Formats and Modalities:** We recognize that people process information differently. We offer information through various formats and modalities to cater for diverse communication styles.
- **Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** We are committed to an ongoing process of learning and improvement, actively seeking and responding to feedback regarding the accessibility of our communications.

3. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all internal and external communications including but not limited to:

- **Digital Communications:**
  - Website content, design, and functionality
  - Social media posts and interactions
  - Emails and newsletters
  - Online forms and registration systems
  - Digital documents (PDFs, Word documents, presentations)
  - Videos and audio recordings
  - Virtual meeting platforms (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet)

- **Print Communications:**
  - Brochures, flyers, and information packs
  - Consent forms and policies
  - Signage within our premises

- **In-Person Communications:**
  - Staff-to-family interactions
  - Information sessions, workshops, and events
  - Phone calls and voicemails

4. Applicable Standards and Guidelines

We aim to adhere to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA as our primary standard for digital communications. All of our communications incorporate neuroaffirmative best practices to ensure inclusivity.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

All staff, volunteers, and contractors involved in communication on our behalf are responsible for upholding this policy.

Specific responsibilities include:

- **Management Team:**
  - Champion accessibility as a core value.
  - Allocate resources for accessibility training, tools and updates.
  - Ensure regular review and updates of this policy.
  - Developing and delivering ongoing accessibility training for all relevant staff.

- **Content Creators (e.g., Support staff and Administrators):**
  - Creating content that is inherently accessible and easy to understand.
  - Using clear, concise, and neuroaffirmative language.

- Providing appropriate alternative text for images.

- Ensuring videos have captions and transcripts.

- Structuring digital documents for easy navigation.

- **Website Developers/Administrators:**

  - Designing and maintaining an accessible website and online platforms.

  - Regularly testing for accessibility issues.

  - Ensuring keyboard navigability and proper semantic markup.

- **Front-facing Staff (e.g., Sensory Centre Support Staff):**

  - Being mindful of diverse communication styles and preferences during interactions.

  - Offering information in alternative formats when requested.

  - Knowing how to direct families to accessibility support.

6. Specific Accessibility Guidelines and Best Practices

6.1. Digital Communications

- **Website & Online Platforms:**

  - **Perceivable:** Provide text alternatives for non-text content (e.g., alt text for images, captions/transcripts for audio/video). Ensure sufficient color contrast.

  - **Operable:** Make all functionality available from a keyboard. Provide clear and logical navigation. Allow users enough time to read and use content.

  - **Understandable:** Use clear, simple, and predictable language. Provide input assistance (e.g., clear labels for forms, error suggestions).

  - **Robust:** Ensure compatibility with assistive technologies (screen readers, voice control software).

- **Documents (PDFs, Word, Presentations):**

  - Use accessible templates.

- Apply proper heading styles and document structure.

- Add alt text to images and graphics.

- Ensure logical reading order.

- Use strong color contrast.

- Provide accessible versions (e.g., tagged PDFs, plain text alternatives).

- **Videos and Audio:**

  - Provide accurate closed captions for all video content.

  - Offer transcripts for all audio content.

  - Use clear audio and visual elements.

- **Emails & Newsletters:**

  - Use clear subject lines and headings.

  - Maintain good color contrast.

  - Avoid flashing content.

  - Provide links to the website for more detailed information.

- **Social Media:**

  - Include image descriptions (alt text) for all visual content.

  - Provide captions for video content.

  - Use clear and concise language.

  - Avoid excessive use of emojis or complex formatting that might hinder screen readers.

6.2. Print Communications

- Use clear, sans-serif fonts (e.g., calibiri) with a minimum font size of 12pt (larger for children's materials or signage).

- Ensure high contrast between text and background.

- Use sufficient white space to reduce visual clutter.

- Provide large print versions upon request.

- Explore options for Braille or audio versions of key documents upon request.

- Design forms with clear labels and ample space for responses.

6.3. In-Person Communications & Events

- **Language:** Use plain, jargon-free language. Avoid idioms or metaphors that may be confusing.

- **Active Listening:** Practice active listening and allow ample time for responses.

- **Visual Supports:** Offer visual schedules, social stories, or other visual aids where appropriate to support understanding.

- **Sensory Considerations:** Be mindful of sensory sensitivities (e.g., lighting, noise levels) in communication environments.

- **Alternative Formats:** Offer to rephrase information, provide written summaries, or use other preferred communication methods.

- **Accessible Venues:** Ensure any physical locations for meetings or events are physically accessible (ramps, accessible restrooms, quiet spaces).

- **Communication Access Services:** When requested and feasible, arrange for services such as sign language interpreters (ISL/BSL) or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) for formal events or complex discussions.

7. Training and Awareness

All staff and volunteers will receive regular training on:

- communication accessibility

- neuroaffirmative practices

- Understanding diverse communication needs of neurodivergent individuals

- Best practices for creating accessible digital and print content

- Effective and respectful communication strategies for in-person interactions.

- How to respond to and address accessibility feedback

8. Feedback Process

We value feedback on the accessibility of our communications. If you encounter any accessibility barriers or have suggestions for improvement, please contact us:

Email: Neurodiversity Ireland Contact Us

We commit to:

- Acknowledging all feedback within 3 business days.
- Investigating reported issues promptly.
- Providing an estimated timeframe for resolution where applicable.
- Implementing reasonable adjustments and solutions to address identified barriers.

9. Policy Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required by changes in legislation, technology, or organisational practices. Updates will be made to ensure our communications remain as accessible and inclusive as possible.