

EDITORIAL POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE VISUALLY IMPAIRED AUDIENCES

(Last updated: November 2017)

EDITORIAL POLICY ISSUES

This guidance note should be considered in conjunction with the following Editorial Guidelines:

- **Accountability**
See Editorial Guidelines Section 19 Accountability

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

- Where information is displayed on screen in captions, it should also be communicated aurally.
- Where contributors are identified by captions, as far as possible they should also be named verbally on their first appearance
- Foreign language contributions should normally be translated with a voice in the main programme language in all new BBC programmes.
- Factual entertainment shows should take account of visually impaired audiences and every opportunity should be taken in talk and chart shows to give the factual information verbally as well as with graphics.
- It may be difficult for some people with visual impairment to make out graphics and text. A useful check of clarity is to spot check in monochrome.

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Introduction

The BBC is committed to ensuring that its programmes and services are as accessible as is reasonably possible to disabled people, whatever their impairments or disabilities. Under Part Three of the Disability Discrimination Act the BBC has a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that this is the case. What is “reasonable” will evolve as technology develops and this guidance is kept under review. The BBC consults a range of disability organisations regularly.

This guidance shows how we can improve access to our programmes and services for people with a visual impairment. The guidelines recognise the fundamentally visual nature of television and video content and encourage creative approaches and solutions.

The BBC also provides audio description services for some output and online support to enhance further the access by visually impaired viewers to our programmes.

More information on audio description can be found on the following sites:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/policies/audiodescription/>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/fact/ouch_guide_to_audio_description.shtml

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/audiodescribed>

Awareness

Around one in 200 of the population is registered blind or partially sighted. 66% of people on the partially sighted register and 64% registered blind are aged 75 or older, an age group who are heavy users of the BBC's services

(Source:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/aboutus/Research/statistics/prevalence/Pages/prevalence_statistics.aspx)

Conveying Information

Where information is displayed on screen in captions, the key message of the caption must also be communicated aurally. For example, where telephone numbers and addresses or details of goods and services are shown, they should be spoken as well. However, in many cases - for instance maps, graphs, explanatory charts and technical illustration - it is inevitable that much of the information in a graphic cannot be conveyed satisfactorily in the limited time available. In these circumstances every effort will be made to communicate its central message aurally.

Identifying Contributors

Where contributors are identified by captions, as far as possible they should also be named verbally on their first appearance, or at some other editorially legitimate point. If naming contributors in this way is unduly cumbersome - for instance in short news reports, or compilations of vox pops or political reaction - we should do all we can to ensure that enough verbal information is conveyed for the material to make sense to a visually impaired audience. It is also important to remember that a person's title or role can be as significant as his/her name as it establishes credentials.

Foreign Language Contributions

If foreign language contributions are subtitled, but not audibly translated, they become inaccessible to people with a visual impairment. People with dyslexia can also find it difficult to read subtitles. Therefore, foreign language contributions should normally be translated with a voice in the main programme language in all new BBC programmes.

However there may be exceptional occasions where it is necessary editorially for the voice to remain unchanged. They may arise where, for example, it is important to understand the emotion of a speaker giving personal testimony. In such cases the contribution may be subtitled. However, we should always then consider whether the essence of information in the contribution can be conveyed verbally or orally elsewhere in the programme, or in associated material.

If an exceptional decision is made to subtitle foreign language contributions in a pre-recorded programme, then it should be considered for audio description.

TVBroadcast&PublicationOperations@bbc.co.uk can give advice on audio description and whether it is suitable for particular programmes (NB audio description cannot be delivered on live programmes). However it is important to note that many people do not have the necessary set top boxes to enable audio description.

For foreign language acquisitions, rights issues may make it unreasonable for the BBC to broadcast such material with a translation voiced in language different from the original.

Drama, Entertainment and Factual Content

Many drama and entertainment programmes depend on visual impact for effect. It is therefore not always possible to explain verbally what is happening. However, there is often scope in factual entertainment to take account of visually impaired viewers. For example, before commissioning quiz shows, consideration should be given to including verbal descriptions. Similarly, every opportunity should be taken in talk and chart shows to give the factual information verbally as well as with graphics.

Graphics and Text

It may be difficult for some people with visual impairment to make out graphics and text, but there are others for whom they would be intelligible if composed carefully.

We should:

- use colours which achieve a good contrast between foreground and background. The best foreground colours are green, yellow or white
- We should avoid pure blues, reds and mauves
- use large clear fonts, ideally without serifs and ensure that the text is clearly legible over all backgrounds including during camera panning shots. Use of drop shadow can help increase the legibility of text.
- avoid graphic sequences which are out of step with simultaneous verbal information

A useful test of clarity is to spot-check in monochrome.

Presentation Announcements

Presentation announcers should ensure that all relevant information is conveyed verbally as well as visually. This is good practice in the interests of every viewer as the verbal reinforcement of the written word aids recall.

Promotional Trails

Producers of promotional trails should aim to include verbal reinforcement of any key visual information. Programme trails should provide programme titles, time and day information verbally as well as visually.

Weather

Weather forecasters should convey the information in a consistent manner and avoid switching between verbal and visual cues. For example, they should not start the forecast by describing the weather pattern and then change the presentation style by referring to symbols without also describing them.