



## Information Sheet 4

# Ensuring your message is accessible and inclusive

The Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) exists to give a **strong voice to older people** about their experience of life in Scotland, their challenges and concerns, and to celebrate the positive contribution that older people make to society.

## BURNING ISSUES

Do you have a burning issue, a local change you wish you could make or a national issue that you would like to influence? It can be difficult to know how best to make your voice heard, who to contact and how to make an impact.

This sheet suggests ways to ensure that your campaign is as inclusive as possible, helping you gain supporters and deliver your messages effectively.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ACCESSIBLE?

Information needs to be good quality, reliable and accurate before people can make judgements about getting involved.

If information is not at a suitable level, in a language or format that meets a variety of needs, then some people will be excluded.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY AN INCLUSIVE CAMPAIGN?

An inclusive campaign embraces diversity by reaching out to people from different backgrounds or including stories that a range of audiences can relate to.

## WHY SHOULD I MAKE MY CAMPAIGN INCLUSIVE?

You may primarily be interested in raising your issue as you have experienced it and getting a solution that meets your needs. However, a campaign is more likely to be successful if it relates to a wider audience. An inclusive campaign is more likely to:

- reach a wider audience by being accessible (for example, by using alternative formats or different languages, being easy to understand)
- gain more supporters, as different groups can relate to or empathise with your position
- be more persuasive to decision makers.

**Your Issue, Your Voice**  
**[www.scotopa.org.uk](http://www.scotopa.org.uk)**

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: SC046520





## Information Sheet 4.1

# Ensuring your message is accessible and inclusive

## 1. IMAGERY

Images are an important part of any campaign. They can help to make promotional materials eye-catching and convey your message. They may even replace lots of text, helping to make your campaign more accessible.

However, images should be selected carefully to be as accessible and inclusive as possible. Avoid images that reinforce stereotypes that could alienate or offend people who you hope will support your campaign. Stereotyping is often unintended – everyone holds unconscious biases so you need to challenge yourself and be prepared to listen if others challenge you.

Examples of visual stereotypes to avoid when representing older age:

- wrinkly hands
- a walking stick
- an older person being taken care of by a younger person.

### When selecting images consider:

- including as diverse a range of people as possible (gender, race, age, disability)
- using icons or graphics, as they can be more generic than photographic images
- fostering positive representations, for example older people as active, experienced, knowledgeable.

## 2. LANGUAGE

The language you use in your campaign is also important in making it accessible to as wide an audience as possible. The following can help improve accessibility:

- Use plain English – this allows as many people as possible to read your message quickly and avoid misunderstandings. Readability tools available in Microsoft Word and other computer packages can help assess how easy your text is to read.
- Use neutral and objective language – this allows more people to relate to your issue and can increase the credibility of your argument.
- Spoken language translation – depending on the size, scale and resources that your campaign has, consider whether you can translate materials into other languages. Are there particular communities that you want to involve in your campaign? Consider how you might best reach these audiences using different channels and formats. There are many online tools to help with this.
- Sensory barriers – make your campaign as accessible as possible to people with sight or hearing loss. This could include offering film clips, animations, visual representations, braille translations of written materials; using subtitles and British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation on visual formats; and ensuring that websites and electronic materials are accessible for screen readers and other adaptive technology. (For more information, see <https://www.gov.scot/accessibility/>)

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## Information Sheet 4.2

# Ensuring your message is accessible and inclusive

### 3. USE DIFFERENT CHANNELS AND FORMATS

There is unlikely to be one way that will reach everyone in your target audience so the more channels and formats that you use, the more likely you are to have an accessible campaign. Develop a plan of how, when and where you will use different channels. These could include:

- websites
- social media
- leaflets
- posters
- events
- phone calls
- emails
- media (national and local news)
- newsletters
- mail
- presentations.

### 4. ENGAGE WITH OTHERS

Campaigns are difficult to run on your own, so working with others will help to maximise your reach, increase accessibility and improve the effectiveness of your campaign.

Engaging with groups and organisations that represent wider and minority views can be a great way to reach wider audiences. These organisations also have expertise and experience to help ensure your materials are as accessible, available and inclusive as possible.

#### Top Tips from SOPA Members

***“Remember many disabilities are hidden, so it might not be obvious that someone cannot see, hear or understand your message. Don’t talk down to people with disabilities or impairments.”***

Sandra Wilson, RNIB

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