Barefoot Dissemination Strategy

Introduction

This tool has been produced to help the Barefoot Team engaged in the dissemination, materials and good practice in learning and training to create an effective dissemination strategy. It is hoped that through this we will maximise our chances of effecting real change within the community learning sector and widen their impact overall. The toolkit draws on experiences learning development projects.

The tool-kit has been designed to assist the project to address the following questions:

- What is dissemination?
- What do we want to disseminate?
- Who are our stakeholders and what are we offering them?
- When do we disseminate?
- What are the most effective ways of disseminating?
- Who might help us disseminate?
- How do we prepare our strategy?
- How do we turn our strategy into an action plan?
- How do we cost our dissemination activities?
- How do we know we have been successful?

Phase 1: What is dissemination?

The term “dissemination” has become a familiar part of our vocabulary within education and it is easy, therefore, to talk about doing it without having a real grasp of what it means, “to disseminate” or what it is you are trying to achieve by doing it. It is helpful to think about dissemination in three different ways:

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1. **Dissemination for Awareness**
   It can be assumed that, at the very least, you wish people to be aware of the work of your project. This may be useful for those target audiences that do
   not require a detailed knowledge of your work but it is helpful for them to be aware of your activities and outcomes. Creating such an awareness of your work will help the "word of mouth" type dissemination and help you build an identity and profile within your
   community.
2. **Dissemination for Understanding**
   There will be a number of groups/audiences that you will need to target directly with your dissemination. This will be because you believe that they can benefit from what your work has to offer. It will be important, therefore, that these groups/audiences have a deeper understanding of our project's work.
3. **Dissemination for Action**
   "Action" refers to a change of practice resulting from the adoption of products, materials or approaches offered by our project. These groups/audiences will be those people that are in a position to "influence" and "bring about change" within their organisations. These are the groups/audiences that will need to be equipped with the right skills, knowledge and understanding of our work in order to achieve real change.*"Part of the project's success is because it has tried to include everyone and embrace them in practical activity. Previous projects have been about awareness, which is where they have failed."*

Perhaps the term dissemination can be best described as the "delivering and receiving of a message", "the engagement of an individual in a process" and "the transfer of a process or product".

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Phase 2: What do we want to disseminate?
Like the majority of e development projects, we have, as a core objective, the need to disseminate the outcomes of our project to a particular community or communities. This will only be achievable and successful if, from the outset, every member of our project team has a shared understanding of exactly what it is we want to disseminate and why. One of the difficulties of projects of this nature is that the project team usually understands what they are trying to achieve but that the target audience do not. This may seem hard to believe but there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate an inability, on the part of a project team, to articulate in clear and easy to understand language what it is their project is about and what it offers it's particular target audience. It is essential, therefore, that we all in the team have a shared vision and common understanding of what it is we want to disseminate together with a way of describing this to those that are outside our project and who may stand to benefit from your work.

EXERCISE 1

1. Ask each member of our project team to write down:
2. how he/she might describe the project to an outsider
3. what he/she believes our project has to disseminate

Collate the lists from each member and, as a group, complete the table below:

- Try to keep each item brief and concise.
- Try to distil the items into no more than ten key points.
- Use the discussion as a way of engaging the project team and obtaining a
  shared understanding of what your project is setting out to achieve.
- When you have completed the box, show it to a few people outside your
  project to check the language you have used is clear.

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Our Project is:

Our Project will be disseminating the following:
1……………….
2………………
3……………..
4.
5.

Section 3: Who are our stakeholders and what are we offering them?

Having clearly identified what it is our project has to disseminate, we now need to think about to whom we want to disseminate. This requires some analysis of our various stakeholders.

A stakeholder can be defined as: "Any group or individual who can affect, or be affected by the achievement of the projects objectives - or can influence these objectives."

The term "target audience or group" can be used to describe the different groups of stakeholders connected to our project. It is important to identify and be clear about who your stakeholders are and then you need to be able to map them to one of the categories outlined in the awareness, understanding, and action model.

External audience- Local community; Local and Central Government;
Educational, learning and training Groups; Media

Internal-Employees (Project staff / Department Staff) Managers (Department Heads / Senior Staff)

Connected
Potential Users (Students/employers) STAKEHOLDER Suppliers (Event organisers etc) Distributors (Libraries etc)

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Having articulated clearly exactly what your project will be disseminating and who your target audiences/groups are, it is essential that you think about what benefits the outputs/outcomes our project will have to offer. Nothing interests a person more than offering a potential solution to their particular problem. These may be local and specific, for example, how to embed key skills in the curriculum in community learning or may relate to larger issues, for example, how to improve participant outcomes or evaluation ratings. The most successful dissemination strategies will be those that actively engage users and deliver what the users both want and

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need. Ensuring that you have engaged our users in an early consultation exercise to establish their needs and wants is an essential part of our project's work. We then need to examine the outputs/outcomes of our project and think about how these can be presented as benefits and solutions to your users.

EXERCISE 2

As a project team we need to spend some time brainstorming as complete a list of our project's stakeholders as we can. This list needs to include as many varied individuals/groups as we can think of whom will need to be, at the very least, informed about the work of our project. These might include, for example:

- learners ;
- Institutional senior management;
- Quality Enhancement units
- Academic/tutor staff within department/sections;
- Heads of institutions
- Members of your Steering Group
- Teaching and learning units
- Professional bodies/associations.

Using the circles below with our project at the centre map our stakeholders into the circles with those to whom we will wish to disseminate to for action closest to the project at the centre and for awareness in the furthest outer ring. This will give us a clearer idea about who (and how) to disseminate your project outcomes to.

- External audience:
- Local community; Local and Central Government;
- Environmental Groups; Media
- Internal
- Employees (Project staff / Department Staff)
- Managers (Department Heads / Senior Staff)
- Connected
- Potential Users (Students/employers) STAKEHOLDER
- Suppliers (Event organisers etc)
- Distributors (Libraries etc)

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EXERCISE 3

Identify three issues/problems that our project's output/outcomes will help to overcome and which target audiences/groups these will apply to. Bear in mind that different target audiences/groups will view their issues/problems differently and are likely to be working in differing contexts - we may need to alter our "message" to suit.

1. Think about how we can present our project's outputs/outcomes as benefits/solutions.
2. Place ourselves in the "shoes" of each target audience/group and think about what problems/solutions we would be looking for.

Issue/Problem	**Target Audience/Group**
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Phase 4: When do we disseminate?

In the course of preparing for the start of our project, we will have been required to draw up a project plan that identifies our milestones. As a dissemination project obviously a significant number of these milestones will be concerned with the completion of a particular dissemination activity.

As with all aspects of our project, it is important that our dissemination activities are an integral part of our project plan. This means that we need to plan your dissemination from the outset. Experience from earlier projects has shown that the approach of leaving dissemination until the final year of the project does not work as it fails to allow time for actively engaging users and finding ways of generating a feeling of ownership amongst those people and groups to whom we wish to disseminate and make an impact. The planning and development of our dissemination strategy must have equal importance placed on it as the other preparatory work we will be doing, or have already done.

Having identified exactly what it is our project will be disseminating, we need to give some thought to the timing of particular dissemination activities and the setting of targets. We will need to consider each of our target audiences/groups and the levels of dissemination required and begin to plan the timing.

It is important to set ourself realistic targets - for example, we may decide that we want to achieve a 90% awareness of our project's work within our discipline, but that this may be an impossible target to achieve for deep understanding of our project's work. We might, therefore, wish to set a lower target for understanding, say 60%. Our targets will clearly depend upon the overall aims and objectives of the project.

If, for example, we wish to bring about a significant change within our approach to teaching and learning or target group, then we will do better to set a realistic target of say 2-3 individuals within each area actively using our project's materials/approaches, than trying to achieve 6-10 individuals. Focus on the quality of our dissemination not just the quantity. Raising awareness right across the teaching and learning environment does not equate to the full adoption or take-up of our project's materials/approaches in a modest number of learners and agencies..

1. Remember to think about the other tasks/activities within our project, as it may be that some of our dissemination activities are dependent upon certain other task/activities being completed.
2. We need to try to avoid thinking we have to "be all things to all people". Keep our dissemination activities well focussed on what we want to achieve.
3. Set realistic and achievable targets otherwise we can only fail

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EXERCISE 5

Using the table below, list our key target audiences/groups together with a timescale by which we will have undertaken one or more dissemination activities. State the reasons for our decisions.

	Timescales	Reasons
Awareness		
Understanding		
Supported		
Favourability		
Involvement		
Commitment & Action		

Your target audiences/groups need to know our project exists and have some idea of what it is about and trying to achieve. This can be done at an early stage and we can use the opportunity to present a clear and easily recognisable identity for the project.

As we begin to create an identity for our project, we may find it helpful to consider some of the following:

1. Previous track records – do any of the project team have a proven track record in the work we are undertaking and, if so, how might we best exploit this?
2. Alliances with other projects – are there other projects within our subject area that we could form links with which would give us a better presence and image?
3. Links with professional bodies/ associations – are there any professional bodies within our area that we could build links with and who would be able to promote our work and boost our profile?

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Phase 5: What are the most effective ways of disseminating?

It is at this stage that we need to begin to match vehicles for dissemination to our objectives.

The two diagrams below set out some ideas around the uses of technology, face-to-face formats and paper linked to the five different levels of dissemination. Effective dissemination can be defined as that which engages the recipient in a process whether it is one of increased awareness, understanding or commitment and action. There are a number of broad issues for consideration as follows:

1. Most audiences are interested in understanding how particular pieces of work fit into a particular context and the extent to which adopting new approaches/methods/materials might have other implications, for example, on future policy, on infrastructure, on learners on facilitators, funding, quality assurance etc.
2. Different target audiences/groups can be easily overwhelmed by dissemination that they may not be necessarily interested in
3. When development projects are undertaking research, it is important to explain to the audience how this piece of work relates to previous work carried out in this field. All will rightly expect to see evidence that what we are doing builds on existing knowledge and expertise.
4. Think about quality dissemination as opposed to just quantity - before sending out yet another mailing think objectively about exactly what we are trying to achieve and whether this is the most appropriate method of achieving it. Be selective in order to achieve greatest impact.
5. There is always a danger of overlapping or conflicting activities. It is useful to make contact with other projects and think about how we might maximise resources, for example, one national conference on a theme is a much better use of staff time and resources. It can also avoid confusing our audience and

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overloading them with an unmanageable number of events, whilst providing "strength in numbers".

6. Some dissemination can be very quick and in an informal setting. We need to have in mind a short (2 sentence) statement about the project which can be our introduction Put well this could be just enough to gain increased interest but at least awareness. We will need to adopt a multi-strand approach to dissemination to ensure our efforts are effective. Experience has shown that disseminating using just one vehicle or method is unlikely to be successful.

There is a tendency for all of us to automatically pick up and run with the most obvious methods of dissemination, for example, newsletters, websites and direct mail. This is because they represent concrete outputs that can be easily evidenced as solid methods of dissemination, but it will be important to explore and evaluate which methods are the most effective and appropriate to meet the needs of our stakeholders, as discussed earlier. In particular, established methods of communication may not be sufficient to target and impact on sections of your community which may not be particularly responsive or aware of the work we are undertaking. Think about disseminating in a variety of ways to suit the needs of our target audiences. Varying our dissemination media will increase our chances of success.

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EXERCISE 6

Using the table below, spend some time identifying the range of different dissemination media we might use to engage particular target audiences.

Target Audience	**Dissemination Method/Vehicle**	**Reasons**

The following list offers us with some ideas of different types of dissemination media that we might consider using.

Face Book Twitter elist eZine eBriefings Webinars eConferences e-mail eReports eWorkshops One-to-one eRoadshows YouTube

It is important to ensure that we have identified a "news story" before approaching a journalist otherwise we will have no chance of getting them interested enough in publishing anything for us . Important points to draw on when producing and presenting material for media dissemination would consider:

Phase 6: Who might help us disseminate?

Projects have sometimes made the mistake of believing that they had to undertake all their dissemination on their own although experience has shown that identifying existing channels through which to work can be one of the most effective methods of dissemination. Inevitably, our target audiences will already have events, journals, professional bodies and associations that they engage with. Our project will stand a greater chance of success if we can work through these existing channels as opposed to creating further publications and events that result in overloading already overworked people.

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It is worth finding out what other projects working in the same subject area or around the same topics are doing and then approaching them with a view to collaborating - this will probably improve the impact of our dissemination as well as reduce overall costs.

Exercise 7

We should spend some time as a project team identifying existing events and other activities that we are aware of that may provide useful channels for dissemination for our project. Identify the relevant organisation or individual and think about whom from the project might approach them with a view to collaborating.

1. Think about what activities our professional body(ies) or association(s) are already involved in.
2. Identify what journals and media our target audiences are most likely to read.
3. Identify what websites and social media our target audiences are most likely to use and see if links to our site can be made.
4. Identify other projects working in the same or similar area to us and think about how we might collaborate.
5. Avoid duplication of effort – if someone else has already done it then think about another way of using our resources.

Phase 7: How do we prepare our strategy?

By the time we reach this section of the toolkit, and if we have completed each of the exercises, our project's dissemination strategy will just about be written. It is important not to underestimate the involvement of the members of our project team in these activities.

If our dissemination strategy is going to be effective, each member of the team needs to feel a sense of ownership –having completed each of the exercises, it makes sense to pull the results of these together to form a coherent document setting out our project's dissemination strategy. It is suggested that we do this under the following headings:

1. Aims and objectives of the project
2. What the project proposes to disseminate?
3. Target audiences/groups

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4. Benefits to end users
5. Dissemination methods/activities
6. Timescales and responsibilities
7. Targets
8. Costs
9. Evaluation and Criteria for Success

Once we have produced this document and obtained feedback from the project team we can move on to developing your action plan.

Phase 8: How do we turn our strategy into an action plan?
Experience has shown that producing a coherent strategy does not necessarily result in effective implementation unless the strategy is articulated as a clear set of actions. The following framework has been developed to enable us to do this in addition to providing us with a useful checklist for monitoring progress.

Purpose	Target Groups	Method	Vehicle	Timing	Responsibility of

Phase 9: How do we cost our dissemination activities?

Having developed our dissemination strategy and action plan, we need to ensure that each dissemination activity has been carefully costed, Earlier projects have sometimes overlooked costs associated with dissemination, for example, the costs of reproducing the final materials for distribution to their target audiences.

Once we have broken down our dissemination activities, we can then begin to obtain estimates of the costs involved.

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Phase 10: How will we know we have been successful?

An effective dissemination strategy will only continue to be effective if we view it as being an evolving and constantly developing process. The environment around us will change during the lifecycle of our project and the contexts within which our end users are working will also change. This means we need to put in place suitable mechanisms for reviewing our progress and the extent to which our dissemination strategy is meeting our objectives.

We will only be able to review and measure our progress if we have established clear targets at the outset. One of the most effective ways of establishing targets is to link them to the five purposes of dissemination as outlined earlier as this will help to focus and drive the dissemination. The five purposes are:

- Awareness
- Support and favourability
- Understanding
- Involvement
- Commitment

We need to set our project realistic and achievable targets. For example, we may decide that the project has the capability of achieving 90% awareness of its activities within our main target group but that this would be an impossible target for understanding. Setting a target for understanding will probably be influenced by a number of different factors, for example, the size of your target group, the culture, the types of materials or methods, etc. It may be that a more achievable target for understanding would be in the region of 20-40%. In terms of setting a target for commitment, this is where we will be actively trying to change particular approaches and encourage real implementation of materials or methods. Inevitably, this activity will be more challenging and your target needs to be set accordingly. Remembering that quality is more important than quantity we need to think realistically about the numbers that we believe we can encourage to change their practice using your methods, approaches or materials.

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As we are thinking about our targets it is important to begin to identify what success for our project might look like. Working as a project team, think about our criteria for success. As we undertake the next exercise, think about addressing some of the following questions:

- How will we know we have been successful?
- What might success for a particular dissemination activity look like?
- What evaluation methods will we use to measure success?
- What outcomes (ie. a change in practice) would we like to see as a result of our activity(ies)?
- What other projects (if any) have worked in a similar area and how successful were they?
- How might we build on previous/existing work to achieve a greater measure of success?

Targets, Timescales and Criteria for Success

Target Group(s)	Timesacle	Reasons	Criteria for Success
Awareness			
Support and Favourability			
Understanding			
Involvement			
Commitment			

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BarefootTrainer Style Guide 2012

Every document that goes out with BarefootTrainer's name contributes to our reputation. The main purpose of a style guide is to achieve consistency across our communications. This puts out a consistent and professional image A style guide also helps us to target our communications more effectively at their intended audiences.

Who should use this style guide?

The quick answer is EVERYONE! This style guide is used by everyone who is speaking about BarefootTrainer or writing or preparing publications (whether this be printed or electronic/web-based products, or promotional, marketing, fundraising or training information), and external contributors to any of our publications.

Please follow these guidelines whenever you are preparing documents for use when talking about Barefoot Trainer.

Consistency of style covers many aspects, including, among others: tone/style of writing (depending on the audience); spelling; punctuation; grammar; footnotes; referencing; capitalisation; lists; abbreviations; and fonts, corporate colours and the use of logos.

The guide is divided into seven main sections:

- guidance on how to refer to BarefootTrainer , including an 'elevator speech';
- BAERFoot's vision and mission statement;
- guidance on language to use;
- corporate style and practical information on logos, photos, fonts etc;
- writing for the BarefootTrainer website and for external

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communications, using Plain English-Language ;

- general guidelines including grammar, punctuation, referencing, abbreviation etc, has been laid out alphabetically for ease of use; and
- preferred spellings.

1, Guidance on how to refer to the initiative

‘Elevator speech’ to explain what is BarefootTrainer and what we do:

Who we are
BarefootTrainer is a leading European support and train the trainer initiative to provide, and deliver work/vocational skills, through an innovative, creative and entrepreneurial adult teaching and learning programme.

What we do
The BAREFOOT Trainer initiative will develop and deliver a new 'Train the Trainer' programme in 6 EU countries. BAREFOOT follows on from previous EU projects using their outputs, including the GOAL project - Generating Adult Online Learning. BAREFOOT will create accredited, innovative VET training course for diverse sectors - formal education, commercial training, and voluntary and Third sector, community and small business sectors. It will deliver a tranferable VET skills set, so building capacity, employability and opportunities for all across the European Union.

Our personality
BarefootTrainer’s Personality is 'Supportive, inspiring, committed to best practice and the principles of life-long learning. ' These qualities must be reflected in all our communications, written and verbal.

2, BarefootTrainer’s vision and mission statement

BarefootTrainer’s vision

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To build and promote best practice in adult online learning to give a new skills set that's immediately useful for teaching or training across diverse VET sectors.

BarefootTrainer's Mission

BarefootTrainer is working to ensure the availability of accredited, innovative VET training programmes for diverse sectors - formal education, commercial training, and voluntary and Third sector, community and small business sectors. BarefootTrainer will deliver a transferable VET skills set, so building capacity, employability and opportunities for all across the European Union

3, Corporate Style and practical information on logos, photos, fonts etc;

Typefaces/fonts:

- Letters, submissions and all unpublished material: Arial 14 point – you can set this as your default font.
- Emails: Arial – you can set this as your default font.
  Website - Arial, 14 point and colour is 474747 (use Arial for the main titles).
- Printed corporate publications Arial: Din.

Logo:

- The BarefootTrainer logo is in development and will be release soon. Ideally, the logo should appear on the top right-hand corner of documents, unless the template says otherwise.
- Please ensure that you do not mis-size or 'squash' the logo if you are using it in documents. To format it, once inserted into your document, go to 'format' and choose 'size' 4.37cm x 5.13cm.
- All external use of the logo and brand must be authorised by Stuart Duffin. Please do not create your own branding for any projects or events.

Corporate colours

Our corporate colours are those that appear in our logo.

Templates

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Templates for the following types of documents are being developed on the network under the Templates folder:

- Letter
- Fax coversheet
- PowerPoint presentation
- Press Release
- Email letterhead

When using the template please save it into your relevant folder first before you start working on it as the original templates need to be kept blank for future use.

Photos

If you are taking photos at an event please get all subjects to sign a photo Consent form, which is in the Photographs folder, to give us permission to publish the photo in the media and on our website. Also clearly caption subject's names. Save the photos, and captions, into the Photographs folder in Communications and let Stuart Duffin know you have done so.

4, Writing for the website and for external communications, using Plain English

As a general point, BarefootTrainer uses positive language to speak for and about life-long-learning. Every word counts. Please don't hesitate to contact Stuart Duffin for more information.

If you are writing for the website or for publication:

- use the relevant font – Arial for an email and so on and in general use;
- use italics for emphasis rather than bold or underlining;
- use short, clear sentences and Plain English;
- pieces for the website need to be short, if it is necessary to have a longer piece, please break it up using subheadings;
- please spellcheck your document using English (UK) spellcheck and not English (US), and insert page numbers;
- use Word structure to label headings – to the left of the font box

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at the top of the screen you can apply styles from the drop down menu, for example, highlight your main heading and then click on Heading 1 etc;

- use as little formatting as possible, for example, boxes etc as these will need to be stripped out – instead mark in text where a box begins and ends; and only use a single space after full stops;
- for data such as charts, graphs etc please supply the data behind the chart as Excel files, not just the chart; and
- all maps should be supplied as jpg files if possible.

Use 'plain English'

NB: Please remember that plain English does not mean 'dumbed down' text. It is about the *way* that you say things.
Using plain English has a number of simple rules:

- the information should be as clear as possible;
- never use three words when one will do – for example;
  bring to an end = end
  due to the fact = because
  make a decision = decide
- be aware of your tone of voice – providing simple information can easily slip into a patronising style;
- use everyday English;
  facilitate = help
  prior to = before
  remittance = payment
  statutory = by law
- sentences should be short, wherever possible – although sentence length should vary;
- get to the point quickly;
- avoid using acronyms and abbreviations, as they can be meaningless for non-specialist – if you must use them spell it out the first time with the acronym in brackets and spell it out at the start of each new section;
- try to use the active voice whenever possible – for example, 'you can apply is better than 'can be applied for';

- use verbs rather than nouns – for example, 'when you arrive' rather than 'upon arrival'; and
- avoid jargon or specialist terminology wherever possible. If you must use it, *always* explain what you mean.

5, General guidelines including grammar, punctuation, referencing, abbreviation etc, has been laid out alphabetically for ease of use.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronyms should always be spelled out in full when they are first mentioned, followed by the acronym in brackets. The acronym can be used from then on. If you are writing a longer or more complicated publication, you can spell out acronyms on their first use in each chapter or main section.

Avoid using too many abbreviations. In the text, 'for example' should be written in full. However, you can use 'eg' in tables and charts.

The more modern style of punctuation does not need any full points in acronyms and abbreviations, so ie, eg, etc.

Americanisms

Spellings with 'ize' are American and should not be used. So, organised, not organized, analysed, not analyzed. Please make sure you spell check your document using English (UK) spell check, not English (US).

Apostrophes

Apostrophes are used for two reason – to show where a letter has been omitted, such as hasn't, and to show possession, such as Peter's house.

Plurals that end in s, such as committees should have the apostrophe after the s, so the committees' decision.

Do not use apostrophes for plurals, such as tomatoes (not tomato's) or the under-18s (not under 18's) and 1990s (not 1990's) and NGOs (not NGO's).

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Capital letters

Official names or titles such as BarefootTrainer, etc should take initial capitals. This makes it clearer for readers, which are official terms and which are not. But, if you are talking about the 'training system', no capital is needed.

Titles and services within the BarefootTrainer Team are capitalised, so:

Otherwise capital letters should only be used at the start of a sentence or for a proper name. Do not use capital T for The before a name unless The is part of the actual name.

Commas

Use commas sparingly:

- singly, to mark a natural pause in a sentence;
- in pairs, around a clause that could be taken out of the sentence completely – for example, 'The car, which was red, was parked down the street.';
- to separate items in a list – do not use a comma before the final item in a list unless it would otherwise be confusing, as this is an Americanism! Just use the word 'and' instead;
- to make the sentence clearer, to avoid confusion over the meaning; and
- to separate out names and titles, for example, 'The booklet, *Safe Arrangements*, will ….'.

Compare to and compare with

Many people get confused with this one, but:
compare to is used when you are talking about a similarity; and
compare with is used when talking about a difference.
'A rate of 10 per cent is very low when compared with a rate of 50 per cent.'

Dashes

'En dashes' are the longer dashes. They can be created in word by pressing control and the minus sign on the far right of your keypad.

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They should be used as follows:

- Between ranges of numbers or dates with no space at either side, for example, 1998–99 or 50–100.
- Dashes with spaces at either side can be used like paired commas or brackets, to separate out a clause, for example, ‘The house – that was red – was built by Jack’.

Dates

The correct way to give a date is 17 August 2001.
Ranges of dates should be as follows: 1998–99.
You should write about the 1990s, not the nineties or 90s, and the 20th Century, not the Twentieth Century.

Eg, etc and ie

These should be spelled out in the main text as ‘for example’, ‘for instance’ and ‘that is. They should usually come between a pair of commas.
It is OK to use the abbreviations eg, ie and etc in tables or boxes, but they do not need any full stops.

Fewer and less

Fewer should be used when something is countable: fewer cars.
Less should be used when something is not countable: less traffic.

Footnotes

Please see References.

Foreign phrases

Avoid using foreign phrases such as *ad hoc*. There is always an English equivalent.

Glossary

A glossary is very rarely needed and should only be used in larger documents that use a number of trickier terms. It is better to explain these terms in brackets after their mention in the text.

Hyphens

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Use hyphens sparingly. They should be used to aid understanding, for example, a deep-blue sea has a different meaning from a deep, blue sea. The first is saying the colour of the sea is a deep blue, while the second is saying that the sea is deep and blue. Hyphens are also usually needed when words are being used adjectively. So, for example, home care (noun) becomes home-care provision (adjective).

Italics

Use italics sparingly. They can be used every now and again for emphasis, but the benefits of this are lost if it is overused. Italicised text is also more difficult for readers with visual impairments to deal with. Italics should be used for titles of publications, journals, newspapers, films and books etc.

Lists

Bullet lists should always follow a colon:

If the bullet points are complete sentences and stand alone, they should all start with a capital letter and end with a full point.

If the points are subclauses, ie:

not full sentences, they should begin in lower case and end with a semicolon; and

the penultimate one should have an ‘and’ or ‘or’ after the semicolon.

Numbered lists should also follow a colon. Numbered lists should be used if the sentence before talks about four points, or seven factors, for example.

Newspapers and other periodicals

The Irish Times

The Sunday Times

The Economist

BUT

the *Irish Daily Mail*

Numbers and percentages

Numbers from one to ten should be spelled out in words, while numbers from 11 upwards should be in numerals. The only case where this does not happen is if you have both numbers above and

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below ten in the same sentence, ie In 2004, 7 of the 23 parents…..'. Number should be spelled out at the start of sentences – 'Seventeen people came to the class…'
Fractions: fractions should be spelled out with a hyphen, for example, one-third, three-fifths. **Do not** use a half, a quarter.

Ages: people are in their 20s, 50s and celebrate their fifth or 50th birthday.
People are 18-years-old, under 18, 18 or over, between the ages of 18 and 20.

Percentages: Use per cent in text and % in tables and boxes. Percentage should be in numbers (60 per cent), unless the figure comes at the start of a sentence, for example, 'Sixty per cent of lone parents live in relative poverty…'. Where possible, try to rearrange the sentence to avoid this.

Fractions and percentages should never be used in the same sentence: 'three-fifths of lone parents experiencing isolation, while 10 per cent don't', does not allow for easy comparison. Choose either percentages or fractions – you do not need both. So, avoid 'nearly one-fifth (19 per cent) of lone parents' and use either 19 per cent or nearly one-fifth.

Times: use the 12 hour clock. Times should be written as 9.00am and 5.30pm, with no space after the number.

Large numbers: use commas to separate thousands, millions etc – 1,000; 3,200,000

Telephone numbers should be as follows: 01 662 9212. Always give the whole number including the regional code. Do not put the regional code in brackets. When listing telephone or fax numbers as part of a displayed address, they should be preceded by the word Tel: or Fax: respectively. Always include a mobile number if one is available.
See also section on dates.

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Organisations

The Government included, these are 'it' rather than they.
Proper names of organisations should begin with capital letters:
the Government (when referring to the particular group in power) but government (when referring to an institution, for example, local government).
the Church (Institution), but the church (building).
the Budget (Government Budget), but One Family's annual budget.

Quotation marks

Use single inverted commas. Only use double inverted commas for a quote within a quote.

Quotations should be accurate. Check the original. Do not alter the spelling or punctuation from the original.

'If shortening a quotation use an ellipsis (three spaced dots). . .'
If you need to add words to make the quotation make sense, use [square brackets].

Where to place inverted commas when closing quotations

The inverted commas go before all punctuation *except:*
before an exclamation mark, question mark, dash or parenthesis that belongs to the quotation
for example, She said, 'It's cold', and turned up the fire.
But
She asked, 'Is it cold?'
When the quotation is part of a complete sentence starting with a capital letter
– for example, 'I am cold.'

References

We use a simple system of footnotes, numbered consecutively throughout a publication. Footnotes should include references as well as any additional text. Footnotes should use superscript numerical markers in the text[1] and should be supplied as a full list at the end of a publication.

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Books:
Author surname, initial/editor (date of publication) *Title in Italic and Initial Capitals*, publisher: place of publication.
For example: Jones, H and Benson, C (2002) *Publishing Law,* Routledge: London [Note no full stop at end of ref]
For publications with more than three authors please use the name of the first author as above and et al.
For example: Jones, H et al

Chapters in books:
Author (date of publication) 'Title of chapter in inverted commas', in Editor*, Book Title in Italics and Initial Capitals*, page numbers, publisher: place of publication

Journal articles
Author (date of publication) 'Title of article in inverted commas', *Journal or Book Title in Italics and Initial Capitals*, vol no, issue no, page numbers

Websites
Organisation to which the website belongs, *address of website in italics*

Government papers
Same as for books, but the government department becomes the author and sometimes the publisher unless this is stated otherwise on the document, for example, The Stationery Office.

If you are referring to the same publication more than once, rather than including all of the information again:

If you are referring to the same publication twice in a row (ie consecutively) the second reference should be:

Author surname, initial (date of publication) *ibid*

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If you are referring to a publication you referenced some time earlier in the publications, the second reference should be:

Author surname, initial (date of publication) *op cit* (note 12)

Stereotypes
It is important to avoid language that confirms stereotypes. Guidance on acceptable terminology is provided by a number of organisations:

Gender stereotypes: Where you know the gender of the person you are writing about say she or he. For plural, use they. When you do not know the gender of the person say she/he or him/her. Ms can all be used as a prefix where the person's preference is known. If their preference is not known, drop all prefixes and use the forename and surname alone. Try to avoid referring to solo parents as 'she/her' unless this is actually the case, ie you are specifically talking about a female learner.
Black and minority ethnic communities: National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism recommend using this term to include all minority groups in Ireland, including the Traveller community. If you need to use a less formal term use from 'new communities' but remember that this does not describe people born in Ireland to ethnic minorities.
Visual impairment: National Council for the Blind of Ireland recommend using the term 'visual impairment' – so if describing a person you would say 'a person with a visual impairment'. This covers those who are completely blind and those with varying degrees of visual impairment.
Deaf or hard-of-hearing: National Association for Deaf People recommends the terms 'deaf' or 'hard-of-hearing people'.
Mental illness: Mental Health Ireland recommend the use of this term for all forms of mental illness in both adults and children. You can also use the term 'mental health issues'.
Disability stereotyping: Refer to people with disabilities or people with learning disabilities (National Disability Authority).

Other stereotypes

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Refer to young people, not the young.
Refer to older or elderly people, not old people or the elderly.

Which or that
Which informs and that defines. An example is as follows:
This is the house that Jack built.
BUT
The house, which Jack built in his spare time, is red.
Which is used when that clause of the sentence can be removed and the sentence would still make sense – The house is red.
Who and which
Organisations and teams are 'which' and individual people are 'who'.

6, Preferred spellings
This is a guideline rather than a definitive list.

Preferred Usage
among not amongst
adviser not advisor
targeted not targetted
while not whilst

acknowledgement
adviser
advisory
ageing
alright
answerphone

barcode
benchmark
biased
bilingual
budgetholders

car park

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cashflow
commonplace
connection
cooperate
coordinate

database
daytime

email
enclose
end-users
enquiry (a question)
eyewitness

factsheets
feedback
fieldwork
flipchart
flowchart
focused
fulfil
full-time (when used as an adjective eg full-time work but full time in other situations eg she worked full time)
fundraising

groundwork

handouts
handwritten
headteacher
healthcare
helpdesk
helpline
hotline

ill-health

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in-depth
in-house
inquiry (official investigation)
instil
interagency
interconnected
internet (lower case)

judgement (in all other cases)
judgment (legal decision)

learnt
life cycle
lifelong
lifestyle
lone-parent students etc

minicom – please use textphone instead
multi-agency
multidisciplinary
multinational
multi-purpose
Muslim

nationwide
no one
nonetheless
notekeeping
noticeboard

okay
on to
ongoing
online
open-plan
organisation (always use ise spellings)
organise

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overcrowding
override
overrun
overstaffed
overtime

part-time (when used as an adjective eg part-time work but part time in other situations eg she worked part time)
per cent
policy makers
postcode
postgraduate
printout

reapply
re-assess
reclaim
recycle
re-elect
re-examine
refix
reinstate
re-let
reorganisation
restructure
re-use
reintegrate

side-effects
socio-economic
spelled
stocktake
straight away
subcommittee
subcontrators
sublet
substructure

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subtenancies

takeover
take-up (noun)
taskforce
teamwork
tenfold
time-consuming
timescale
toolkit

under way
understaffed
update

website
well-being
while
wide-ranging
widespread
workload
workplace
workplan
worldwide
worthwhile

Recap

Font size
The larger the font the easier it will be for visually impaired clients to read. A font size of 16 is recommended for large print documents. However, for practical purposes very large font sizes are not always possible. A font size of at least 14 point is the best compromise.

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Font type

Avoid highly stylised typefaces, which use flamboyant or decorative handwriting styles. They may look attractive to you but to someone who is visually impaired they are completely illegible.

Font styles

People who are visually impaired prefer a font that is easy to distinguish and it is preferable to use bold or semi-bold. Light fonts are not recommended.

Blocks of capital letters, underlined or italicised text are all harder to read. A couple of words in capitals is fine but try to avoid the use of capitals for continuous text. Underlining text or setting it in italics should also be avoided. An alternative method to emphasise the relevant section should be used, such as explaining verbally or in a separate note to your client the parts of the document which need particular attention.

Numbers

When typing documents that contain numbers it's useful to remember that people with a visual impairment often have difficulty distinguishing between 3, 5, 8 and 0. Use a font type that is easy to read, and where practicable give or confirm the numbers in words.

Word spacing and alignment

Use left alignment on all documents, as this is easier to read because the spacings between words are more regular than justified text for example.

Paragraph spacings

The spacings between lines of text in a paragraph are also important. As with font, the bigger the better, so try to use at least 1.5 sized spacings between each line.

Columns

Some people prefer to read columns rather than long lines of text across a page. However, make sure that you leave enough space in between each column to differentiate them from one another and/or

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use a vertical line to distinguish the end and beginning of each column.

Contrast

The contrast of the type against the paper will have implications for its legibility. Avoid using coloured font or paper that may disguise the text. People with a visual impairment do not see shades of colour well. Black text on white or yellow paper is adequate.

Setting text

When setting text avoid using vertically placed words as these are difficult for visually impaired people to read. Also try not to place text directly over an image as this will usually camouflage the words against the image (see Contrast). Text wrapped around an image is also difficult to read.

Page layout

The layout of each page should be consistent so as not to confuse the reader. Page titles, headings, and numbers for example should be repeated in the same place and style on following pages. If the document is several pages long then a contents page can be helpful. Spaces between paragraphs can be used to divide text and improves the flow of the document, making it easier to read.

Forms

People who are visually impaired often have writing that is bigger than the average. Therefore spaces for the client to complete or sign a document need to be bigger. We can provide signature guides for use with visually impaired people on request.

Printing

Glossy finish on documents creates a glare that is difficult to read for those with visual impairment so try to choose a matt finish where possible. Thin paper that bleeds images and text from the reverse is not recommended. Choose uncoated paper that weighs at least 90gsm for the best results and print on one side only where you can.

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NOTES

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