



Communicating for Falkirk

STYLE AND BRAND GUIDE



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OUR HOUSE STYLE

Follow these rules to make your work consistent and professional.

- **'The Partnership'**
Always refer to the organisation as 'Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership' in the first reference. After this, you may refer to us as 'The Partnership' for brevity. The same approach should apply to the Integration Joint Board. If your document refers to multiple 'boards', for example the Integration Joint Board and the NHS Forth Valley Board, you should write these out in full or preface Board with 'Falkirk' or 'Forth Valley' to avoid confusion.
- **'We'**
Organisations should be referred to in the singular: 'The Partnership **is** communicating' not '**are** communicating'. When appropriate, you may write in first person plural (we) to make your copy feel much more personal.
- **Websites**
Leave the "www." out of website addresses within paragraph text. I.e., falkirkhscp.org to reduce clutter
- **Abbreviations and jargon**
The healthcare environment is cluttered with abbreviations and jargon, which assume knowledge, can confuse the reader, and break up text. Try to avoid the use of 'HSCP', other abbreviations, and technical language as much as possible. The Plain English Campaign has a [useful guide](#) to writing medical information in plain English, translating many common phrases and abbreviations.
- **Numbers and percentages**
Spell out numbers one to ten and use figures for 11 upwards. If you start a sentence with a number, use words, e.g., Seventy people volunteered. Millions should be written (£3million), other amounts of money should use figures (£250).

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Inclusive communication is good for everyone. By making everything easy to access, simple to understand, and appropriate for everyone, our message will go further.

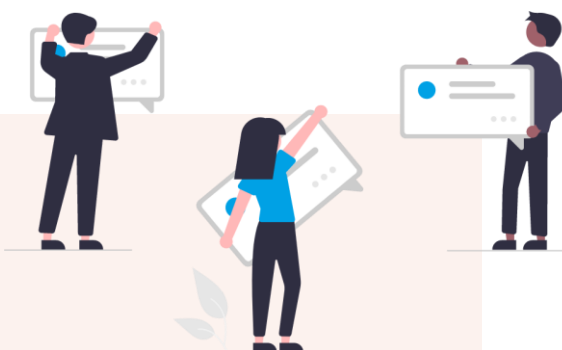
The Partnership communicates with many vulnerable, disadvantaged, and under-represented groups. Our communication should always be mindful of the language it uses when communicating to its audiences – respecting the preferences and dignity of these communities.

It is important to be sensitive and to keep up to date with appropriate and acceptable language use. Just because terms have been commonly used in the past, doesn't mean they are appropriate for use today.

General guidance for making your writing inclusive includes:

- The use of **'people first'** language can help to humanise the audience you are communicating to. For example, instead of 'service user' or 'user' you can refer to 'people who access our services', 'people supported by Caledonia Service'.
- When writing about disabilities, the use of **'ability-first'** or **'identity-first'** language is often preferred by individuals within these communities or their sub-groups. For example, "the autistic community" rather than "people with autism". You should **always use the language preferred by your audience**.
- Eliminate ableist and negative language from your writing. Examples of this includes "dumb", "lame", and "crazy", or describing someone living with a condition as "suffering from" – these words and phrases promote harmful stigmatisations of the disabled community. They are a form of discrimination and prejudice.
- Avoid using words that describe disability to also convey negative meaning in other contexts. For example, 'blind' is sometimes used to describe people who are ignorant – creating a negative association with the disabled community.
- Adapt the style and format to the needs of your audience. This may require the use of illustrations often referred to as easy-to-read or accessible symbols.

The UK-wide [Writing about disability and difference style guide](#) from NHS Digital provides some useful guidance for use when writing about disability, physical or mental differences, diagnoses and conditions.



PEOPLE OR IDENTITY FIRST? A QUICK LANGUAGE GUIDE

PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE

Usually preferred when describing something that is **not part** of a person's identity.

- You wouldn't describe someone foremost as an 'anxious person' as 'anxious' isn't an identity that someone would associate with. Anxiety is something someone has, rather than what they 'are' - **they are a person with anxiety**, or a **person with experience** of living with anxiety.
- You wouldn't describe someone foremost as a 'service user', as accessing the service isn't a core part of their identity. This description also wouldn't make sense if you took it out of the health and care context. A service is something someone uses, rather than part of who they 'are' - **they are a person accessing the Partnership's services**.

IDENTITY OR ABILITY-FIRST LANGUAGE

Usually preferred when describing something that **is part** of a person's identity, often a disability.

- When writing about disability, you should be mindful that a person's condition can have a significant impact on how they interact with the world and live their life. This can impact their identity, so many communities associate themselves with their disability, for example **they are an autistic person** rather than 'just' a person with autism.

STILL FINDING IT TRICKY?

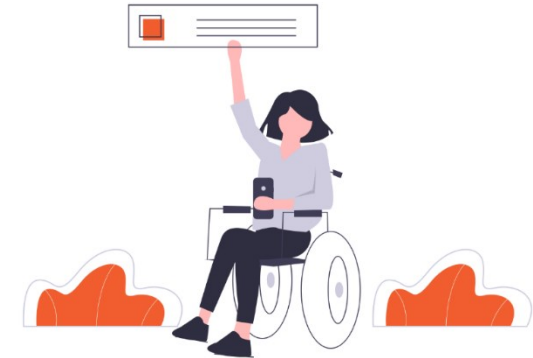
Don't worry, language can be complicated, but it is important to get it right. If you are stuck, don't be afraid to ask your audience – either directly or by asking a group or organisation which advocates on their behalf.

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION

All public sector bodies are [required by law](#) to make content published online after 23 September 2020 accessible. Your document will not be uploaded to the Falkirk Council, NHS Forth Valley, or Falkirk Partnership website until it meets the requirements of the [accessible documents policy](#).

The Partnership has produced accessible templates. Prior to publication online, it is the responsibility of the document author to ensure it is accessible.

If you follow the hints and tips below, you should produce a document that is accessible for all users. A full guide to producing accessible documents is available on [Falkirk Council's employee pages](#)



ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST

- Use a minimum font size of 12.
- Always use a single column, left-aligned format.
- Instead of using **bold** or underlined font to mark subheadings, use heading styles to indicate hierarchy and sections. This allows people using screen readers to skip or 'tab' to the section they need.
- Use empty space wisely. Large amounts of text can be off-putting. Use short paragraphs and bullet points.
- If images provide context, set alternative text by right clicking the image and selecting 'edit alt text'. Align these images 'in line with text' by right clicking, selecting 'wrap text' choosing 'in line with text'.
- Images included for design purposes should be marked as decorative by right clicking, selecting 'edit alt' and marking the checkbox. This will hide the image from screen readers.
- When linking to websites, make the link descriptive so it can be read out of content. For example, the [Partnership's website](#) provides more information, instead of [click here](#) to learn more.
- You can check the accessibility status of your word document under the Review toolbar, by selecting 'check accessibility' and following the prompts and tips until warnings and errors are cleared.

CORE DESIGN ELEMENTS

This is an overview of the core elements of our visual identity. To make sure the work you're creating is unquestionably from the Partnership, always follow the individual guidelines for using these design elements provided within this guide.

OUR LOGO

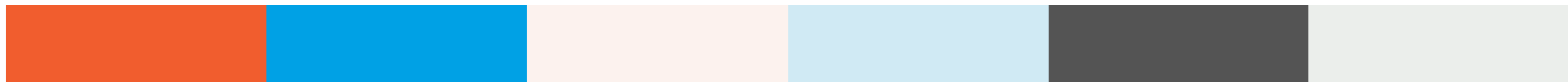


TYPOGRAPHY

Montserrat | Montserrat Light | **Montserrat SemiBold**

Montserrat is a free [google font](#) embedded within most modern websites and the Partnership's template documents. If unavailable, you should use Calibri or Arial fonts. You should always use at least size 12 font and format according to Falkirk's accessible documents policy.

MAIN COLOUR PALETTE



#F15D2E

RGB Values:

- Red: 241
- Green: 93
- Blue: 46

#00A1E5

RGB Values:

- Red: 0
- Green: 161
- Blue: 229

#FCF2EE

RGB Values:

- Red: 252
- Green: 242
- Blue: 238

#D0EAF4

RGB Values:

- Red: 208
- Green: 234
- Blue: 244

#545454

RGB Values:

- Red: 84
- Green: 84
- Blue: 84

#EBEEEE

RGB Values:

- Red: 235
- Green: 238
- Blue: 235

OUR LOGO

Always use an original logo file. Do not attempt to alter or replicate the Partnership's logo.

CORPORATE LOGO

The main logo for corporate activity, and a stacked logo for use when space is not available



PARTNER LOGOS

Joint branding: Grey out 'secondary' logos when the Partnership is the lead organisation in projects and initiatives.



MONO COLOUR LOGOS

For use on graphics and documents. Suitable for clashing colour schemes, where logos have been repeated, or where the Partnership is not the lead organisation in a joint project.



COLOUR PALETTE

Use this page as a visual guide for the range of colours you could use in designs. You should avoid the excessive use of colour in one design or document, keeping in mind these principles when creating content:

- make use of white space and avoid large areas of black and grey.
- be sensitive when using the main logo colours, so it doesn't become overpowering.
- font colours must be within an easy-to-read contrast.

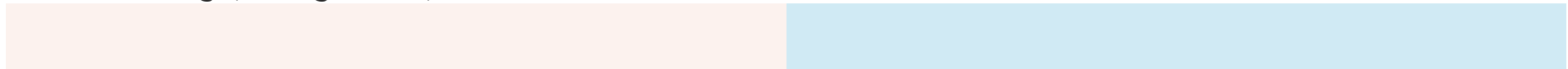
LOGO COLOURS

For limited use in the logo, graphic design, and colour blocking. Text and headings should not be set in these colours.



NEUTRALS

For use in design, backgrounds, and illustrations.



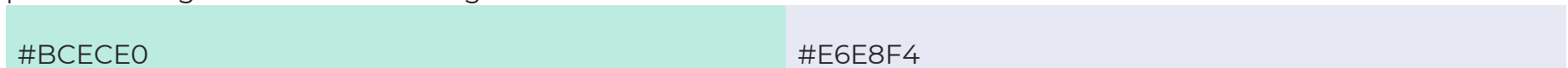
BASE GREYS

For use in design, backgrounds, and text.



SUGGESTED SECONDARY COLOURS

For **limited** use in icons and joint branding, **never to be used on their own**, and always alongside the main colour palette or original version of the logo.



HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Photography, illustrations, and video are powerful, engaging elements that add value when used appropriately alongside content. Visual elements should be attractive to the eye, easy to scan, and can be used to break up large chunks of text. A selection of photography is available within the Partnership's media library, in the [Colleague Hub](#).

If you can't find what you need, images can be sourced through the below resources or new photography and videos can be commissioned via the Council's photographer and Communication teams.

FALKIRK COUNCIL MEDIA LIBRARY

A Falkirk Council image library is [hosted on Flickr](#). Images without identifiable people in them may be used in Partnership materials without further permission. Images containing people must confirm usage rights by [emailing the Council's photographer](#) with details of the images and intended use.

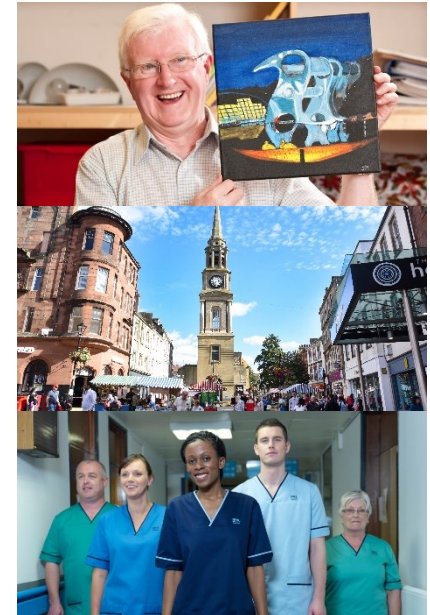
NHS SCOTLAND MEDIA LIBRARY

Staff can also request images from [NHS Scotland's media library](#) via the Partnership's Communication Officer.

STOCK IMAGES, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND ANIMATIONS

While using original media from Falkirk Council or NHS Forth Valley is preferred, the limited use of commercial stock images and media can also improve the look of Partnership materials. To maintain authenticity and relevance, stock sources should only be used for generic photography. Avoid the use of media which are clearly not of Falkirk or Scotland, such as foreign roads, environments, and medical or clinical settings.

- Websites such as [Unsplash](#), [Many Pixels](#), and [Undraw](#) provide free images and illustrations for any project.
- Free images, icons, and illustrations are available within Microsoft Office. While in Word or PowerPoint, navigate to the 'Insert' toolbar, and select either 'Pictures' for stock images, or 'Icons' icons and illustrations.
- Adobe Stock. Access to paid stock images can be requested via the Partnership's Communication Officer.
- The use of images and animations should be used in line with accessibility guidelines and requirements.



JOINT PROJECT BRANDING

Partnership working is in our name, so we know there are lots of opportunities for joint projects. When collaborating with others, we want to promote awareness of the Partnership and the work it carries out.

While other organisations may have their own branding guidelines to consider, follow these guidelines for joint projects led by the Partnership:

- **Always** use the main Partnership logo. Avoid creating a new logo for a joint project or service.
- **Always** use existing Partnership communication channels. Do not set up project-specific social media channels, newsletters, or websites.
- **Apply our core design elements** – including our logo, colour scheme, font, and photography. These elements give our work a consistent look and feel, helping people understand they are delivered by Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership.

EXAMPLE: LIVING WELL FALKIRK PILOT

During the Partnership's pilot of the Living Well Falkirk Advice Hub, an online service accessed by video call, joint branding was developed which indicated the Partnership's 'ownership' and included the project's partners. **Pictured, right:** *Front cover branding for a Partner toolkit, featuring the Partnerships colour logo and font, alongside mono-colour versions of partner logos.*



SOCIAL MEDIA

OUR PLATFORMS

You can find The Partnership online at [@FalkirkHSCP](#) on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

The Partnership's social channels share news from across all services. To share news items on social media, staff can send brief details to the Partnership's communication officer, who will draft and schedule content as appropriate.

To maintain a cohesive tone, corporate identity, and reliable source of information, individual services **should not** create their own accounts.

Acknowledging the unique communication requirements for people who are deaf, blind, or experience sensory issues, the Partnership's Sensory Services run their own accounts on Facebook and Twitter, with support from the Communications Officer, to provide a single source of accessible formats.

USE YOUR OWN PLATFORM

Colleagues, staff, and volunteers undertaking work on behalf of Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership are encouraged to share their work and positive stories through their own channels and interact with the Partnership's accounts.

While doing so, you should follow your organisation's social media policy. This will cover things like using your mobile device at work, taking pictures, and confidentiality issues. The Partnership has published its [own guidelines](#) for interacting with us, outlining how we should all treat others online and how we moderate content posted on our social media channels.



TEMPLATES AND RESOURCES

A wide range of templates and resources are available to download via the Partnership's [Colleague Hub](#). You should use these materials when drafting any communication.

TEMPLATES

Available within the brand and template folder:

- Email signatures
- Official letters
- Board papers and agendas
- Report documents
- Landscape booklets (How this guide is formatted)
- Internal Briefing sheets
- PowerPoint slides
- Leaflets and printed posters
- 'Ready to go' materials which help describe the Partnership and its services



GOOD HOUSEKEEPING – VERSION CONTROL

All policy, strategy, and public-facing documents should include 'version control' information which identifies key contacts, publication date, an expected future review date, and associated documents (if applicable).

RESOURCES

POLICIES

- [Falkirk Council accessible document policy](#) and [guide](#)
- [Falkirk Council writing guide](#)
- [Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership's Communication Strategy 2021-2024](#)

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND ACCESSIBILITY GUIDES

- [Disability Information Scotland – Resources and Publications](#)
- [Writing about disability – Glasgow University Guide](#)
- [Inclusive language – Inclusion Scotland article and guide](#)

WRITING STYLE AND LANGUAGE TIPS

- [Scotland's Inclusive Communication Hub – Health and Social Care Resources](#)
- [Plain English Campaign – Writing medical information](#)
- [UK Government Style Guide](#) for public service communication
- [Scottish Drugs Forum: A glossary of contested terms in substance use](#)
- [Samaritans: Guidance on reporting or communicating about suicide and self-harm](#)
- [NHS Digital – UK wide resource - Disability Language Style Guide](#)
- [Victim Support Scotland – Language guide for discussing criminal justice issues](#)
- Community Justice Scotland – [Framing toolkit](#) and [national image library](#). (free use)

DESIGN, IMAGES, AND SYMBOLS

- [Symbol sets for accessible communication and people with learning disabilities.](#)
- [Falkirk Council Media Library](#)
- [unDraw – customisable free illustrations for any project](#)
- [Unsplash – Free images for use on any project](#)
- [Many pixels – Free illustrations for any project](#)



**Falkirk
Health and Social Care
Partnership**

CONTACT INFO

For further information, guidance, or communications support, please contact Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership's communications officer on HSCPComms@falkirk.gov.uk