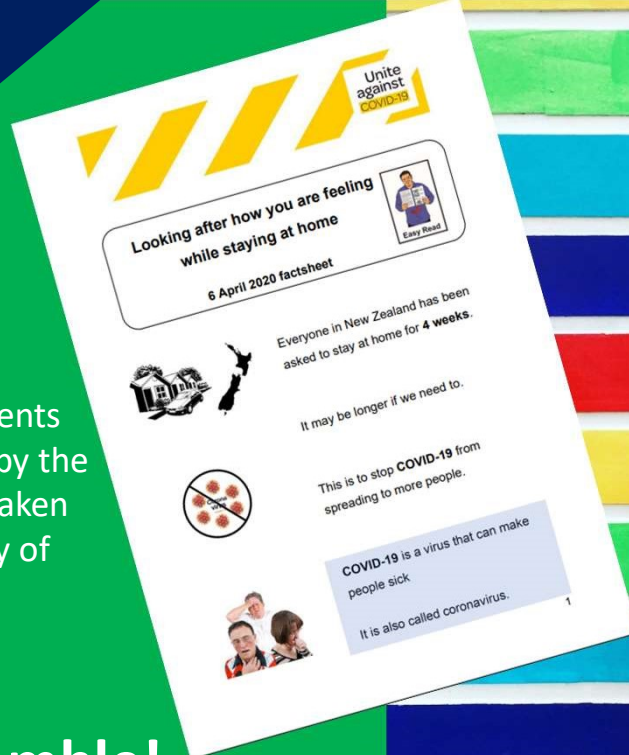


Easy Read documents being developed by the team have been taken up by the Ministry of Health



Avengers assemble! Disabled people need information too

The influential work of our 3DHB Disability Strategy team is well-recognised by the Ministry of Health

Leo Goldie-Anderson was working on disability specific COVID-19 communications in her 3DHB Disability Strategy team role on that last Thursday of “normal” life, when they and colleague Stew Sexton got the “Avengers, assemble!” call – the Ministry of Health was getting everyone working on disability issues and communications related to COVID-19 together in one place to focus their efforts, and the work of our 3DHB Disability Strategy team is well-recognised as being influential nationally.

During a crisis disabled people need information just as much as everyone else but they often need more specific information too, or have different questions about complex situations. They need the right information, tailored to their needs, simple to understand, and they need it fast. The challenge was to get hold of this information, and translate, produce and make it available in alternate formats like NZSL, audio and Easy Read! This process usually takes days or weeks, and the team only had hours.

The MoH established two groups; one to identify issues uniquely facing the disabled community and find practical solutions to them, and one to focus on accessible communications and informational needs for disabled people, which Leo and Stew were part of. The team was still working furiously on setting up processes and churning out information when the whole building stopped to listen to the Prime Minister’s announcement of the shift to Level 3, and Level 4 within 48 hours.

Leo says from the very beginning the team described this whole endeavour as “building the aeroplane in mid-air”. While Leo initially came in to help write plain language content for the disabled community, their role within the group changed relatively early on, and they spent most of the last two months leading the Alternate Formats translations team within the COVID-19 Disability Response Team.

“The commitment to providing information in accessible ways during this crisis has been huge, and it’s awesome that attention is being paid to alternate formats! As a group we’ve made huge progress toward getting them into the mainstream consciousness a little bit more as a normal part of communications.

“Getting a huge shout out from the United Nations to say we’re doing a good job highlights how necessary this work is, even when we’re not facing a pandemic. Accessible information benefits absolutely everyone, particularly when we are all working together as a country to keep each other safe!”

