



Copy Style Guide

Design

Company

Date

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1.0

The background is a solid dark blue. It features several large, faint, light blue geometric shapes. On the right side, there is a large, stylized 'Z' or 'G' shape. In the upper left, there are some curved lines. The overall aesthetic is modern and minimalist.

Our work is guiding people through difficult times, so the way we communicate is everything.

The key pillars of our communication style based on the Nielsen Norman Group Tone of Voice framework:

The Basics:

- **Formal/Informal**

We are friendly, accessible and engaging with a conversational tone that still conveys our expertise and authority in the field.

- **Funny/Serious**

Our clients are coming to us in times of crisis and dire need, so our tone needs to lend reassurance by reflecting how seriously we take our work.

- **Enthusiatic/Matter of fact**

While we want to be uplifting and empowering, our clients are coming to us more for comfort and guidance than inspiration – so we err on the side of straight-talking.

- **Respectful/Irreverent**

We have a profound respect for everyone we work with and for, and this is reflected in our tone as well as our attention to accessibility.

2.0

The background features several large, faint, light blue geometric shapes. These include a large circle in the upper left, a diagonal line running from the top right towards the center, and several rectangular outlines of varying sizes and orientations scattered across the lower half of the page.

These are the key characteristics that shape our brand identity and set the tone for all our communications – no matter the audience.

Approachable - A port in the storm

First and foremost, we are a safe space for people whose lives are in crisis to feel welcome and well looked after. That's why we strive to be as accessible as possible. Whether we're speaking to clients, partners or donors, our aim is to make everyone feel included.

We talk to every person like a person. Keeping language simple, friendly and easy to understand. Because our messaging should reassure and empower, not shame or patronise.

Tenacious - A fierce advocate

Knowledge, expertise, credibility – these qualities are crucial and underpin the reputation we've built in and around Bristol. **But what sets us apart is our tenacity and perseverance.** We may be small, but we are fierce. We call it like we see it. We're unwavering in our beliefs. And while we're always respectful, we communicate with passion, energy and grit – adding colour to everything we say and do.

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Compassionate – A sincere confidante

What does everyone at Housing Matters have in common? We all care a great deal. Not just about the cause, but about the people – each individual client. That's why we listen to their stories and shape our support around their needs. Everything we do, we do with **empathy and respect** – and our tone reflects that. It's warm, personal and instantly puts people at ease.

Empowering – A beacon of hope

The many stigmas surrounding homelessness and poverty leave many feeling isolated, vulnerable and ashamed. Our underlying mission is to help everyone see that **they are worthy of a home that is safe, comfortable and secure.**

We also speak to the people that want to help but don't know how. Or people that want to work with an organisation that has the right impact.

Either way, we speak with strength, optimism and assurance – giving them faith in us, and faith in themselves.

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Professional - A trusted voice of reason

People who know our work, know our clients are in good hands. We want them to know it before that. That's why **our tone reflects the confidence and credibility we've built over the years.** While our warmth is essential, it's our expertise and authority in the field that builds long lasting trust with our clients, partners and donors. So, it's important that we communicate in a way that is as professional and efficient as the way we work.

Reliable - A steady hand

While passion drives our work, it's stability and dependability we provide to our clients, partners and donors. **We are strong, sound, resilient** – and our tone is rooted in this durability.

3.0



When it comes to our communication – consistency is key. It helps us build trust and familiarity with our audience.

Write the way you talk

The formality of our tone can be dialled up or down depending on the format and the audience we're addressing, but for general marketing material, the tone should be warm, conversational and human.

This means using contractions (see below), staying away from complex jargon, and avoiding language and sentence structure that's overly academic or corporate.

- **So** NOT Therefore or Thus
- **But** NOT However
- **Also** NOT Furthermore

Also, you CAN start a sentence with a conjunction.

Most of the great writers out there do.

There is a widespread belief—one with no historical or grammatical foundation—that it is an error to begin a sentence with a conjunction such as and, but or so. In fact, a substantial percentage (often as many as 10 percent) of the sentences in first-rate writing begin with conjunctions. It has been so for centuries, and even the most conservative grammarians have followed this practice. (The Chicago Manual of Style)

For example:

We believe housing is a human right. And we fight tirelessly for everyone to have a safe and secure home.

Vs

We believe housing is a human right and we fight tirelessly for everyone to have a safe and secure home.

The first is stronger, more emotive and easier to read. The second isn't bad, but it lacks the same confidence and energy.

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Consider the audience

Much like when speaking to different people, we adapt our tone slightly depending on the audience we're addressing and what we want our messaging to achieve. For instance, when we're raising awareness, we want to dial up our compassion, tenacity, and approachability. When we're raising money, we want to sound more reliable and professional.

Use active voice

Active voice is an important part of our empowering tone.

Housing Matters empowers our communities.

NOT

Our communities are empowered by Housing Matters.

We care deeply about each case.

NOT

Every case matters to us.

We lift people up by giving them the tools they need.

NOT

By giving people the tools they need, we lift people up.

The dog ate the bone

NOT

The bone was eaten by the dog

When it comes to our communication – consistency is key. It helps us build trust and familiarity with our audience.

Use the collective voice

We. Us. Together. We'll. Let's. All.

This creates a greater sense of community and a deeper rapport with the audience.

Here at Housing Matters, we believe...

Let's transform communities together

Keep it short and sweet

A part of our work is helping to simplify complex issues, and our messaging should do the same. Our writing should be punchy, concise and easy to understand. Keeping sentences short is a key part of this. For SEO and readability sentences should ideally not exceed 25 words max.

Dates

Dates are displayed as day, month, then year

08/01/2023 or 08.01.2023 or 8 January 2023

Numbers

Numbers one to nine are written

10 upwards should be numeric form

Millions or billions should be written with the number followed by millions

Capitalisation

Sentence case for all headings

-Trusted and capable NOT Trusted and Capable

Contractions

Don't be afraid of the apostrophe!

With more formal documents, contractions may be too informal. But for our general marketing, contractions help make our tone warm, conversational and human.

For example:

We're	NOT	We are
We've	NOT	We have
We'll	NOT	We will
They're	NOT	They are
Shouldn't	NOT	Should not
Can't	NOT	Cannot

Housing Matters Copy Style Guide
