



**Making
Written Things
Easier to
Understand**



This document and its content is copyright of Changing Our Lives
© 2020.

All rights reserved.

Any reproduction of part or all of the contents in any form is prohibited other than the following:

- you may print or download to a local hard disk extracts for your use only
- you may copy the content to individual third parties for their use, but only if you acknowledge Changing Our lives as the source of the material.
- You may not, except with our express written permission, alter or exploit the content

Version 4 - January 2021



Contents

Introduction	4
Ways to share information	6
Make it personal	7
Make your words easier to understand	8
Make your pictures easier to understand	10
Meetings and appointments	12
Some examples of Easy Read	14

Introduction



All people communicate.
Communication is a basic human right.
Each person has their own ways of understanding and being understood.



Some people communicate using words, signs, pictures or objects.
Some people move parts of their body to communicate.
Some people use sounds to communicate.



It is important to take the time to get to know how a person communicates and understand how to make communication work well.



Good communication enables people to understand and take ownership of information that is about them and their lives.



We want to make sure that disabled people can easily speak up about what is important to them.
Everyone should be involved in making choices and decisions about their lives.



This book is about making written information easier to understand.
It may help you to write for someone with a learning disability, someone who finds reading difficult or someone who is learning to read in English as a second language.



The ideas in this book are just the beginning.
We still need to check that people understand.
We may need to try different things for different people and different situations.



The Accessible Information Standard was updated in 2017.
All NHS providers and adult social care service providers need to follow it.
They must ask people about their communication needs.



They must find ways of meeting those needs.
They must keep a record and share it with anyone in their team who needs to know.
This should lead to people getting information in a way that they understand.



We have used the Accessible Information Standard to update this book.

Ways to share information



Not everything needs to be written down. Think about the best way of getting your message across. Lots of people find a conversation in person easiest to understand.



Sometimes you have a message to share with lots of different people. A video can be helpful. It lets people see your body language or real images of things you are talking about.



Some things need to be written down. It gives the person a record that they can keep and look back on later. It is good for short and factual information like appointment letters.



Plan your document so it has a clear message. Make it organised and easy to follow. Take time to check your document. Get someone else to read it and check it makes sense.



Making a document easy read doesn't mean taking out important information. It should just be an easier version of what everyone else gets to read.

Make it personal



Just using easy words and pictures doesn't mean that everyone will understand. Check that the person understands and try another format if they don't.



Plan plenty of time for the person to read and understand the information. Make time for the person to read through it with you or someone else and talk about it.



Some people can't read at all. Using large, clear pictures or objects of reference may be more helpful.



Check what picture clues the person likes. Some people use Photosymbols. Some people prefer PECS symbols (Picture Exchange Communication System), where each word has a symbol that goes with it.



If you are using photos, use real photos where possible. For example, a picture of the person's own doctor is better than a stock image of a doctor.

Make your words easier to understand

Font size 10
Font size 12
Font size 14 ←
Font size 16
Font size 18
Font size 20

*No fancy fonts
for your text*

Long sentences are difficult to understand and make reading very awkward especially when the sentences could be broken down in to smaller chunks and made easier to read without too much hassle or difficulty.

~~However~~
But

1 Use at least size 14 font
You should always use font size 14 as a minimum on all documents. For people with a visual impairment, this may need to be made bigger.

2 Use a clear font
Use a simple font such as Arial or Century Gothic. They are much easier to read and understand.

3 Keep your sentences short
Only put one piece of information in each sentence. Complicated sentences should be split up to make them easier to understand.

4 Use easy words
Always use easy words. Don't use big words. They make documents hard to understand.

Councillor - A Councillor is elected by local people to make decisions on the services the council provides.

BLOCK CAPITALS CAN MAKE READING LONG PASSAGES OF TEXT DIFFICULT, *as can italics* and underlined text

Date: 10th December 2020
Time: 10.30am

Coloured backgrounds and cluttered pages make reading more difficult.

5 Explain words clearly
Not all hard words can be made easy. If you need to use a hard word explain what it means.

6 Keep formatting simple
Avoid using italics, block capitals or underlining.

7 Use bold to make important information stand out
This could include things like headings, phone numbers, times or dates.

8 Make good use of contrast and white space.
Use black writing on a white background where possible. Leave space between paragraphs.

Make your pictures easier to understand



- 1** Putting in a picture can help people understand things. Pictures can be helpful when talking about people, places, times or actions.



- 2** Put photos on the left hand side of the page. Text goes on the right hand side.



- 3** Pictures should be at least 4cm by 4cm. The pictures are just as important as the text. Some people will need larger pictures.



- 4** Choose the right picture or photo for the text. Always use pictures or photos that people can easily recognise. Use a real picture from the person's life if you have it.



- 5** Use the same picture each time so people learn what it means. When you find a photo or picture that works well to support people to understand something, keep using it.



- 6** Use pictures that add meaning. Try to read your document without looking at the text. The pictures or photos used should be able to give you all of the information you need.



- 7** Make the best of your pictures. Start with a large, clear image. Take care not to squash or stretch the image when you edit it. Display your images in colour, not black and white.

Meetings and appointments



1

People may need support in meetings or appointments to understand written information, even when we use easy words and pictures.



5

Remind the person that they can bring a supporter to a meeting or appointment to help them to take part, take notes or follow up actions afterwards.



2

Give people time before a meeting or appointment to read through any papers. This is especially important if they are going to have to make a decision based on the information.



6

Remember to use clear language when you are talking. Avoid jargon or acronyms. Speak to the person, not their supporter.



3

Letters, leaflets or paperwork should be sent out as early as possible. This gives the person time to ask someone to help them understand.



7

There should only be one set of minutes and agenda for a meeting, not two. Minutes can be easy to read without missing out information that everyone needs.



4

Check that the person has support to plan what they are going to say. They may want to write down any questions or key points they want to raise before the meeting or appointment.



8

There should be an easy way for the person to stop the conversation if they don't understand. In larger meetings, some people use a red card or a buzzer for this.

Some examples of Easy Read



Dear Helen,



Please come to your **review meeting**.
This meeting is about your support.
We will talk about what is working well and
what you want to change.



It is on **Friday the 12th of May**.



It is at **10.30am**.

Kamal's Work Plan



Work starts at **8am**.



I like to get to the office at **7.50am** to put
my things away and make a coffee.



If I am the first person in the office I need
to switch the alarm off.
I put the code in.



I need to check my emails for any new
jobs.
Louise will send me an email to tell me
what we are working on each week.



**No one is too disabled,
or too affected by
mental health difficulties,
to live an ordinary life**

Changing Our Lives

Tel: 0300 302 0770

Email: ask@changingourlives.org

Web: www.changingourlives.org

Twitter: @positive_lives

Registered Charity Number: 1093883