HCC Easy Read Standards

A Guide to making Easy Read information

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1   How to...make easy read information

Easy read is one way of making information more accessible to people with a learning disability. It can also help people with low literacy levels in English.

Easy read is about making written information as simple as possible for people to understand and removing any barriers a person may have to understanding information we produce.

It is important that resources are targeted to where they will be most effective – so consider the cost, relevance and proportionality of creating an easy read document for certain things. There may also be a requirement for additional support to help people understand the information.

2   Why make easy read information?

If you are making written information for people with a learning disability, or if you are consulting or involving Hertfordshire service users as a whole, remember you have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make information as accessible as possible. Consider whether making information easy to read will help service users.

3   Using a Easy Read Provider

You can use a provider who will charge you a fee to make the document easy to read. It is a good idea to obtain more than one quote from suppliers before choosing one and allow plenty of time. You will need to send the original version of the document to the provider before they can let you know how much it will cost and how long it will take to create the easy read version. You may want to ask them for examples of work they have already completed.

4   Experts by experience

Experts by experience, people with a learning disability, can be asked what they think of your easy read information.

5   Creating your document

If you decide to make the information you are creating easy to read, you can use this guide to help you. Ideally you should use put pictures into your Easy Read document. The Photo Symbols website has a large selection of Photo Symbols (the pictures we use in Easy Read documents) and templates.

There is also an Easy Read Checklist that sets out the standards at a glance. Remember – good Easy Read tells service users what they really need to know!

6   The words you use

Use everyday language and easy words that we use all the time. Get out of the habit of using jargon and difficult words. Think about whether people will know what a word means and if they need to know the word.

If people don't need to know a difficult word then don't use it. Find easier words or easier ways of saying the same thing.

- Explain difficult words if you have to use them. Use real life examples to do this where you can.
- Imagine saying it out loud. How would you explain something to someone sitting next to you?
- Use language like we and you. Speak to the person. **We will let you know**...not... **We will advise service users**.
- Do not use too many words like **I**, **You**, **Him** or **Her** unless it is clear who you are talking about.
- Use the same words to mean the same thing throughout.

7   Grammar and style

- Use numerals for numbers not words, **8** not **eight**.
- Write in short clear sentences. Just 1 idea in each sentence. Try to use a full stop instead of and or a comma (,). Leave out hard punctuation " * : ; ! % ".
- Use active verbs. For example, **John loves Mary** not **Mary is loved by John**.
- Avoid words that are ideas and concepts, such as equality, freedom, independence unless you are sure people will understand what they mean.
- Do not use double meanings or play on words such as **The grass is always greener**. **Hit me with it**!
- Big chunks of writing can be overwhelming for people. Break up chunks of writing.
- Use bullet points, lists, step-by-step instructions, photo stories. But make sure bullet point lists make sense and are not too long.
- Do not use abbreviations. Use **for example** and **do not**, not **e.g**. and **don't**.

8   Using pictures

The pictures we use should always help people to understand the text. They are not there for decoration. Using a pretty picture on a poster or leaflet will not help if it does not make it clear what the information is about.

- Use clear photographs that reflect or introduce what the writing is about.
- Colour photographs are best if possible.
- Pictures should be uncluttered, with a clear background.
- Put pictures on the left of the page, words on the right, because we read English from left to right. It could be different if you are writing in another language.
- Make it clear which piece of writing the picture goes with.

- Be consistent. Use the same picture to mean the same thing all through your document.
- Do not put text on top of or across a picture.
- Use pictures of clocks to show times. Times should be in 12 hour format.
- Some pictures in a cartoon style can be confusing or childish.
- Maps and charts are difficult to understand. Use pictures of places that people will recognise. Explain how to find the place in words as well as pictures.

9   Layout

- Leave lots of space around the writing.
- Keep everything about a subject on the same page.
- If you have to use more than 1 page for a subject, start each new page with more about whatever the subject is.
- Do not split words over 2 lines.
- Do not split sentences over 2 pages. If you cannot finish a sentence on a page move the whole sentence to the next page.
- Use page numbers.
- Do not use columns as they can be confusing. It is easier to read straight across the page.
- Use bold to highlight important words.
- Do not use italics or underlining
- Italics and block capitals change the shape of words and can make them harder to read for some people.
- Do not use leaflets that fold out – such as an A4 page folded into 3 sections.
- Make your information A4 or A5 size, like a book. This is the easiest format for people to follow.
- Use different sections with easy titles and have a contents page if it is a longer document.
- Do not make your booklet too long. Aim for 12 pages maximum.
- Make it available in other ways if you can like YouTube video, CD or DVD.
- On forms leave a lot of room for people to fill in their name, address and so on. It often helps people to have a box to write in rather than lines to write on.

10 Choosing the type of writing and the paper

- Use a typeface that is clear like Arial.
- Text should be size 16 point or bigger.
- Make sure headings are clear.
- Make sure the writing stands out against the colour of the paper.
- Green is not a good colour for paper.
- Words in white (reversed out text) on a coloured background can be hard to read.
- Shiny paper makes it harder to see the words and pictures because it reflects light.
- Dark font on a pale or off-white background is regarded as the best contrast.
- Be as clear as possible.
- Tell people only what they need to know. Get straight to the point.

- Think about the order you put the information in.
- Miss out information you do not need (behind the scenes)
- Add in extra information you do need.
- Use active verbs - **We will send you a letter next week** not **You will be sent a letter**

11 Good rules to remember

1. The information is not for you.
2. Easy read is not a translation.
3. Do not worry about making things too simple.
4. Ask people what they think.

12 CHECK LIST

Use either Arial or Comic Sans font so that words are clearly written	
Use a font of 16 – 20, and nothing smaller than 14 point so that words are big enough	
Make sure that the font colour is black or blue	
Make sure that the paper or presentation background is white or pale coloured	
Ensure that line spacing is 1.5 or 2 times line space	
Make sure that letters are spread apart and that there are clear spaces between paragraphs	
Use left alignment	
Make sure your document or presentation is no longer than 10 pages/slides long	
Print documents single sided only and number pages	
Create information that you can read like a book as it is easier to follow than lots of sheets	
Make your presentation A5 size or larger so it is easy to hold and turn pages	
Use both words and pictures as they are both important and use Photosymbols pictures or pictures that are easy to understand	
Use Photosymbols of clocks to show times. Time should be in 12 hour format	
Use photographs of places that people will recognise as maps are difficult to understand	
Make it clear which pictures support which bits of text, and only use pictures that are relevant to the text and not used for the sake of it	
Make sure pictures are as big as possible and put the relevant pictures and words next to each other	
Use words that we use all the time and that are easy to understand	
If you have to use difficult words, then say what you mean using easy words	
Use numerals for numbers not words. 23 instead of twenty three	
Write in short, clear sentences. Just have 1 idea in every sentence	
Use active and not passive verbs. For example John loves Mary and not Mary is loved by John	
Use full stops and try not to use any other punctuation	
Use bullet points for examples and instructions	
Try to avoid using abbreviations. Use for example and do not, not e.g. and don't	

13 EASY READ DICTIONARY

Some suggested easy words

instead of	use
improve	make better
assistance	help
Ensure	make sure promise
consult	ask you about
provide	give
employment	work a job
attend	go to
regular	every ...
produce/create	Make
community	the area where you live the people who live with/near you a group of people
independence	so that you can do things for yourself
empower	make you able to so that you
await	wait for
commission	buy

Consider using an online dictionary such as Wiktionary in Simple English, which is an online dictionary that uses simpler words so it is easier to understand.