

# How to make your information more accessible



## A quick guide to designing information for people with a learning disability and their supporters

- keeping the words easy
- using symbols and pictures
- audio and video
- useful local and national contacts

### Golden Rules

#### Write in Plain English

Don't use too many words, jargon, long sentences, or complicated language.

#### Design it Clearly

- don't clutter the page
- use a clear font,
- have text at least 14pt
- use lines and boxes to break up sections



#### Use Pictures, Photos & Symbols

Carefully chosen pictures, photos and symbols can help to make information look more attractive and help explain the meaning of the words.

### Designing good information is just the beginning

Spending time going through information together is what makes it truly accessible.

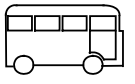
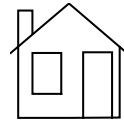


By making your information easier to read and understand you make it more accessible for everyone, not just people with learning disabilities

# Why we need information that's more accessible

People need information to make choices about their life. Services for people with learning disabilities must make sure that people have support to make their own choices & have more control in their life.

People with learning disabilities, parents, carers, advocates, and staff all need information that's easier to read.



People need information about things like housing, benefits, work, leisure & travel



People have different levels of reading skills and understanding so it's hard to make information completely accessible for everyone. But there is a lot we can do to make information much **more** accessible for people. The word 'accessible' is often used to describe buildings. It's the same idea with information. If information is not accessible people can't get into it.

## Writing in Plain English

With Plain English you write as you would talk. **If you wouldn't say it don't write it.**

**Summarise your information. People need the main points.** We often use too many words.

### Some principles of Plain English:

- **Keep your sentences short**  
Sentences should average 15 - 20 words.  
Use more full stops and less commas.
- **Use everyday words & avoid jargon**  
Write **agree** instead of **acquiesce**. Write **help** instead of **ameliorate**.  
Jargon is language only understood by a particular group of people. Jargon can be complex words like **governance** or shortened terms like **PCT**.  
Don't assume people know your jargon - if you can't always avoid it, explain it.
- **Write in the first person**  
Write - **Please send the form back to us.**  
Don't write - **The recipient must return the form to the organisation**

Goodbye then, please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information



For more information visit the Plain English Campaign website  
[www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)

There is lots of useful information on their website including free guides to writing in Plain English, and an A-Z of alternative words.

They also run training courses.

# Design Style

## There are some basic design rules to follow:

- **Use Clear Fonts** - sans serif fonts like arial are easier to read than serif fonts like Times New Roman
- **Text size** - 14pt is the minimum ideally
- **Don't use capitals for sentences** - IT LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING
- **White space, lines and boxes** - Try not to clutter the page. This is difficult when you use a large font and pictures. Having space on the page with no text or pictures (white space) makes it easier to look at. Use lines, boxes, and colour to break up large blocks of text. (This leaflet would be too busy for many people)
- **Use bold not underline for headings** - underline is harder to read
- **Using contrast** - Make sure the writing stands out clearly against paper colour
- **Use lists to break up text** - Bullet points make information easier to follow.

## Using Photos, Pictures and Symbols

Symbols are simple line drawings that represent a single word or idea.



car

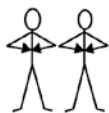


doctor



want

Some symbols, like car, are easier to understand because they look like what they mean. Other symbols, like doctor and want, are harder to understand. People need help to learn symbols.



We



are



going to



the



beach



in



the



minibus

Many of us use too many symbols on a page. Most people don't read with symbols. The symbols help to communicate the main message.



We

are

going to

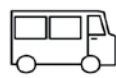
the



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minibus

Symbols also help people remember the meaning later. 3 symbols for key words are plenty for most sentences.

Most people use a computer program called Writing With Symbols. Go to [www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com) to find out more. **There is a free guide to using Writing With Symbols at [www.communicationpeople.co.uk](http://www.communicationpeople.co.uk).**

**You can use your own photos to illustrate your information.** Find photos on the internet by going to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Click **images** to do an image search.

There are a range of graphics packages you can buy to help illustrate your information.

Go to [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk) and click **tools** for a list of graphics packages.

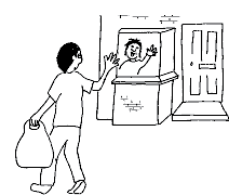
These images are less specific than symbols and people can take their own meaning from them. They will give important clues and make your information look more interesting.



Access First



Photosymbols



Change Picturebank

## Other Ways of Making Information More Accessible

Before translating information into alternative formats like other languages, Braille, or audio it's important to make sure the words are written in Plain English.

**Recording information onto tape or CD can help to make it more accessible** for many people including people with a learning disability. This doesn't have to be done professionally. Recording the meeting minutes onto tape means people can listen to them in their own time.



**Video makes information very real, literally bringing it alive.** Why not have a go with a camcorder and make a short film about your service. It doesn't need to look completely slick and professional. Video is far more real therefore far more accessible to people.

## Surrey Based Information Services

**The Surrey Association for Visual Impairment (SAVI)** have a transcription service for Braille, Large Print, Audio and Raised Images. Visit their website: [www.surreywebsight.org.uk](http://www.surreywebsight.org.uk)

**Woking Interpreting and Translating Service (WITS)** can translate your information into 25 different languages. Phone **01483 750970** for more information.

**MAKATON** can translate your information into Makaton signs and symbols. Some people with learning disabilities use Makaton. **Visit their website [www.makaton.org](http://www.makaton.org)**

**The Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD)** can support and advise you on communicating and making information more accessible for deaf people, including deaf people with learning disabilities. Phone **01306 881958** for more information.

**Valued Promotions** can help you to plan and run conferences that are more accessible for people with a learning disability. They can also help make your information more accessible. Phone **01932 567666** for more information.

**The Clear Communication People Ltd** design information that's more accessible for people with a learning disability and their supporters. We designed this leaflet. Visit our website [www.communicationpeople.co.uk](http://www.communicationpeople.co.uk) There are also free training handbooks on using Word, Powerpoint and Writing with Symbols to download.

[www.aboutus.org.uk](http://www.aboutus.org.uk) hosts the Learning Disability Partnership Board in Surrey's website. You can download information about Keeping Safe in the Community, Local Health Services. Our new handbook about accessible hospital information will be available here later in 2006.

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## Useful National Websites

[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk) Make it clear is Mencap's campaign to encourage people in charge of organisations and public services to provide information in an easy read format. There is a free information guide to download.



[www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk) has a set of free downloadable guides to making information more accessible. Also in their tools section they list the main graphics packages available to buy.

[www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com) has information about Writing With Symbols and Communicate In Print. These computer programs use symbols to make information more accessible.

[www.valuingpeople.gov.uk](http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk) is the national website for Valuing People, the Government's recent White Paper on services for people with learning disabilities. There is a lot of useful information to look at and download including easy to read guides on Direct Payments and Valuing People.