(DH) *Department of Health*

Making written information easier to understand for people with learning disabilities

Guidance for people who commission or produce Easy Read information – Revised Edition 2010

DH INFORMATION READER BOX

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Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is primarily for public sector organisations at a local and national level. It is aimed at organisations who produce public information specifically for people with learning disabilities.

This guidance is written for anyone involved in commissioning Easy Read materials. This is most likely to be policy or communications professionals but it will also be useful for people that, for example:

- produce or commission national literature (e.g. advice and guidance leaflets)

- conduct public consultations

- manage the board of a public body, such as Non-Departmental Public Bodies or Local Strategic Partnership Boards.

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Foreword from the Minister for Care Services and Minister for Disabled People

We are pleased to support this guidance, which aims to improve the way that government and the public sector communicate with people with learning disabilities.

Everyone should be able to access and understand information that affects their everyday lives, including the 10 million disabled people.

Information that is easier to understand helps people to make better choices on issues such as education, employment and healthcare.

It also helps people with learning disabilities to achieve a more equal role in society, to give us their views and help us shape government policies and services.

We hope you find this guidance useful. It is just one of the ways in which we are raising the standard of accessible communications across government and the wider public sector.

You can find more advice and tools at www.odi.gov.uk/communications and the Valuing People Now webpages www.dh.gov.uk/valuingpeoplenow provides some really good examples of accessible information.

Paul Burstow
Minister for Care Services

Maria Miller
Minister for Disabled People

Message from Scott Watkin, the Co-National Director for Learning Disabilities

I am delighted to be writing a few words about the easy read guidance because this will help commissioners, and local authorities to make consultations in easy read and other documents. This will help people with learning disability to be more effective when a consultation comes up, and enable them to communicate and have a valuable contribution to matters that concern them.

Message from the National Forum for People with Learning Difficulties

I really welcome this document on Easy Read Guidance. People with learning disabilities will have information they can understand and will enable them to have power to participate in the Big Society as it so easy to be excluded through lack of information. Also, it should be remembered that is not just people with learning disabilities who will find documents giving Easy Read information much easier to understand. I hope people will use the same form of Easy Read throughout all departments.

Michael Ratcliffe – Co-chair

Message from the National Valuing Families Forum

Getting the right information, at the right time, in the right format is crucial for families as they attempt to find out how to get the best help and support for their family member at different ages and stages of their life.

We welcome this guidance as a useful tool for all those organisations who are serious about making information more accessible for people with learning disabilities and their families.

Message from the National Advisory Group on Learning Disability and Ethnicity

The guide will be very useful to change the way we all make information easy read. This will not only help people with learning disabilities but also people for whom English is not their first language. I hope this will help all government departments and members of the public and carers who work with people with learning disabilities to make information easier to understand.

Richard West – Chair

1. Introduction

Knowledge is power

"Access to information is the key to participating in society, achieving in education and gaining employment. The importance of access to information is reflected in its recognition as a fundamental human right, backed by legislation."[1]

1.1 Over the past 20 years and especially since the publication of 'Valuing People'[2] there has been a growing commitment to the delivery of information in formats that are more easily accessible to people with learning disabilities.

1.2 Across public services there has been recognition and increased demand that people with learning disabilities should be able to access information. People with learning disabilities need to be able to understand information if they are to have more choice and control over their own lives and to become more active and equal citizens.

1.3 Access to good quality and meaningful information is especially important for people with learning disabilities and their families at crucial times of change in their lives, or when considering major life choices, such as:

- leaving school or college

- thinking about getting a job, both at school and beyond

- moving from one place to another, including moving out of a residential setting to supported living

- thinking about having a direct payment or personal budget

- becoming involved in a sexual relationship

- deciding to get married

- becoming a parent

- becoming a carer for another family member

- retirement.

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1 RNIB, 'Accessible Information', available at: www.rnib.org.uk/seeitright
2 Department of Health, 2001, 'Valuing people: a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st Century: A White Paper' available at: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4009153

1.4 Public sector organisations have a duty to ensure that people with learning disabilities and their families can meaningfully access the information they need throughout their lives.

Why have we developed this guidance?

1.5 'Valuing People Now'[3] sets out a commitment to ensure that all government departments produce information that is accessible to people with learning disabilities. The delivery plan (2009-10) also committed to the publication of a 'set of standards' to help those commissioning or producing accessible information. This guidance fulfils that commitment.

The legal case

1.6 Under UK law, public sector organisations have specific requirements to provide accessible information for disabled people:

- The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) says all service providers must make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people can access services

- The Disability Equality Duty (part of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005) says public services must actively promote equality of opportunity for disabled people and eliminate discrimination

- The majority of the provisions in the Equality Act came into effect in October 2010, replacing the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The provision to make reasonable adjustments is still a requirement.

1.7 On an international level, the UK has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 9 says that government should take action to ensure accessibility, equal to that of non-disabled people, including information and communications services.

The business case

Government commitment to disability equality

1.8 In 2009, the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) published a cross-government plan[4] which identifies the steps that need to be taken to achieve disability equality. It includes a commitment to improving the way government

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3 Department of Health, 2009, 'Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities' available at: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093377

4 ODI, 2009, 'Roadmap', available at: www.odi.gov.uk/roadmap2025

communicates with disabled people. This covers a range of factors including providing accessible information and using appropriate language, imagery and tone.
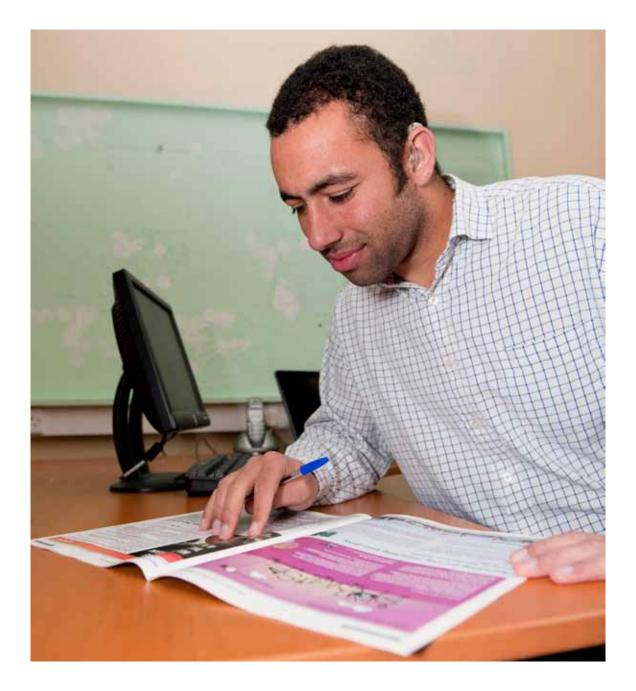
Your communications

1.9 There are an estimated 1.5 million people with learning disabilities in the UK.[5] National and local public sector organisations that communicate with the general public need to consider how they communicate with all disabled people, including people with learning disabilities.

1.10 The process you go through to ensure your message is accessible to people with learning disabilities, will help you clarify the key points you need to get across and help you identify the simplest way to say it. As a result, you will be making your message more accessible to everyone.

1.11 By ensuring that your communications are accessible, you are more likely to reach your target audience and achieve your goal.

The purpose of this guidance

1.12 At present, public sector organisations produce Easy Read publications in a variety of styles. It can be difficult for people with learning disabilities and their supporters to switch from one style to another. So instead of improving access, organisations are inadvertently creating barriers.

1.13 This guidance aims to create a consistent minimum standard across national and local government. It builds on the Disability Rights Commission's guidelines 'Easy Read: How to use easy words and pictures' and includes input from organisations and individuals that produce or commission Easy Read, including people with learning disabilities.

1.14 These are flexible guidelines and should complement existing good practice in your organisation.

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5 Mencap, 2010, 'What is a learning disability?', available at: www.mencap.org.uk/page.asp?id=1684

2. Defining Easy Read

"Making information easier to understand for people with learning difficulties is about more than making your text size bigger and putting some symbols or pictures in your document.

It's about working with people your information is for, finding out together how you can make the information useful and accessible for them. It's about thinking about how we all make sense of information. There are no quick answers, and it isn't easy... but it can be fun."[6]

2.1   Easy Read is one way of making information more accessible to people with learning disabilities. Easy Read is also known as:

- Making information easier

- Easier to understand information

- Simple words and pictures

- Easy Write

- Easy Info

- Easy Access

2.2   The main purpose of an Easy Read document is to tell people with learning disabilities what they need to know. Easy Read is not a simple translation of existing documents into easier to understand language. Easy Read versions should concentrate on the main points of a document so that people with learning disabilities can understand the main issues and make decisions if necessary.

2.3   When commissioning or producing Easy Read it is important to remember that people with learning disabilities are a broad group and that often, Easy Reads are public documents, which need to cater for a broad level of ability.

2.4   Some people with learning disabilities may also need assistance to go through an Easy Read document, particularly where it includes complex or sensitive information. Easy Read documents can act as a tool for supporters to help someone with a learning disability understand the key issues about a subject.

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6   EasyInfo, 'About making information easier', available at: www.easyinfo.org.uk/dynamic/easyinfo4.jsp

2.5   Easy Read is also a useful format for other groups of people. When tested with people for whom English is a second language, it is found to be a useful way of explaining complex information. This includes British Sign Language users and black and minority ethnic communities.[7] However, it should not be assumed that Easy Read is always their preferred format or the most appropriate way of delivering information. If targeting these groups, audience insight will help you determine the most appropriate channels. Translations of Easy Read documents may even be appropriate for some people from black and minority ethnic communities, but it is recommended that this is tested with those communities and individuals before commissioning.

Easy Read is not always the answer

2.6   Easy Read is not the only way to communicate with people with learning disabilities. Other methods include video, talks, presentations, drama, murals, role-play or posters. See **section 5** on using other formats (p 23).

2.7   **Consultations**
For consultations, many public bodies write formal questions that contain jargon and are not always easy to understand. This can create a barrier for disabled people and you may be able to get better answers if you adapt the questions for your audience.

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7   Department for Work and Pensions, 2009, 'Provision of Accessible Information for Disabled and Ethnic Minority Groups', unpublished

Case study: adapting a consultation for people with learning disabilities

In 2010 the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) reviewed their standards for pre-registration nursing training. They consulted on a set of draft standards covering the knowledge, skills and attitudes required of qualified nurses.

It was important that people with learning disabilities were able to participate because they often use the services that nurses provide. The NMC worked with Mencap to tailor their approach. Mencap produced a short, Easy Read questionnaire, which focused on people's own healthcare experiences rather than on complex questions about the draft standards themselves.

As well as the Easy Read questionnaire, a focus group was carried out in order to consult face to face with people with learning disabilities. The focus group made use of scenarios and role-plays so participants could act out and talk about the experiences they'd had in hospital.

The consultation generated rich data that gave a good insight into the experiences and needs of people with learning disabilities as well as reinforcing some of the key messages from the standard consultation. This helped inform NMC's decisions about the new standards and enabled them to place sufficient emphasis on the priority nursing skills identified.

Guiding principles for making information accessible

2.8 The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) has identified some guiding principles that government departments should apply to their work to improve services and information for disabled people. These are a good starting point for anyone commissioning or producing information for people with learning disabilities.

2.9 They are:

1. Ensure that people with learning disabilities are involved from the start.

2. Provide information through a range of channels and formats.

3. Ensure your information meets users' needs.

4. Clearly signpost to other services.

5. Always define responsibility for information provision.

Further details can be found in the publication 'Five key principles for producing better information for disabled people'[8].

2.10 The government's Engage programme for communicators has a number of principles, which should be applied to public focused communications. Two principles of Engage are:

- Listening, consulting, understanding, questioning to obtain insight into people's motivations, needs and barriers.

- The best people experience is achieved when the views of the public are fed into all aspects of policy development and service delivery.[9]

By listening to your audience – which includes people with learning disabilities – you will understand what information they need, how they prefer to receive information and the barriers they experience in trying to access that information.

If users are involved in both policy development and communications development the project or product is more likely to meet their needs.

More information about how to involve disabled people is available on the ODI website: www.odi.gov.uk/involve

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8   ODI, 2008, 'Five principles for producing better information for disabled people', available at: www.odi.gov.uk/fiveprinciples

9   Government Communication Network, available at: www.wiki.comms.gov.uk/index.php/Four_key_components (login required)

3. Commissioning Easy Read

Planning phase

3.1   Before you commission a supplier to create Easy Read information it is helpful to answer some key questions to help you think about what you want and why.

Key questions

3.2   **Why are you producing Easy Read information?**

- What do you want to tell people with learning disabilities?

- Do people with learning disabilities need to know this information?

- Do you want to involve people with learning disabilities in a consultation?

- Are you consulting on a policy or project that will affect their lives?

3.3   **Who exactly is the Easy Read document for?**

- Is the information for people coming to a specific meeting where they may all know each other and have a common understanding of key issues (e.g. a Board meeting)?

- Is it information for a big group of people across the country (e.g. a national consultation)?

- Do you already know the communication needs of the people it is aimed at?

3.4   **How will people with learning disabilities use the information?**

- Will they read or use it once (e.g. an agenda for a specific meeting)?

- Will they keep it for a long time and refer to it again (e.g. a document or guidance that will help them make a decision)?

3.5   **Is Easy Read the most appropriate format on this occasion?**

- Is Easy Read the best way of communicating your message or information?

> **Case study: national policy consultation**
>
> The Office for Disability Issues held a consultation about how to implement a national policy called the Right to Control. The new Right would give disabled people more choice and control over the support services they receive to go about their daily lives.
>
> Because the policy could affect the way people with learning disabilities receive support, the team decided to produce an Easy Read document to explain the consultation. The document included pages where people could write their response to the consultation questions. This 'work book' section was well received – a number of booklets were returned with completed responses.

How to commission Easy Read

3.6   Once you have thought about the above questions you are in a position to write a brief or specification about what information you need. If you are going to tender for this work you may need to consider how you are going to ask potential suppliers to go through the tender process because some organisations may be run or managed by people with learning disabilities. You may need to provide additional support to enable these organisations to tender for the work.

3.7   It is a good idea to use the planning questions and your answers to shape the brief you will give potential suppliers. Your questions need to be specific to ensure the organisation can deliver your requirements. Your local procurement team may be able to help you.

Choosing an organisation to produce Easy Read

3.8   There are many different types of organisations that produce Easy Read. They include private companies, voluntary groups, large disability organisations and user-led organisations. Many have their own area of expertise, such as social care or education. Some specialise in producing formal booklets, others are good at adapting minutes and agendas for an individual's participation. Using an organisation that employs people with learning disabilities is a good idea.

3.9   At present, there is no nationally recognised system of accreditation for organisations that create Easy Read information. So it is important to find out if the organisation you are thinking of working with has the right skills and experience.

3.10 Checks should include:

- Whether they test their materials with users. Have they tested their style and format of Easy Read with people with learning disabilities, and do they continue to do so?

- Whether they have an understanding of the social model of disability and an appreciation of the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act.[10]

- A review of previous work, especially of the type you wish to commission.

- References from previous clients.

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10 Visit the ODI website if you would like more information about the social model of disability www.odi.gov.uk/social-model or more information about the Disability Discrimination Act www.odi.gov.uk/law.

4. Involving people with learning disabilities

Involving people with learning disabilities

4.1 People with learning disabilities should always be involved in creating Easy Read. This is good practice and is recommended by ODI in their 'Five key principles for producing better information for disabled people' (see section 2).

4.2 Sometimes public information has to be produced to a tight deadline and a pragmatic approach is needed. For example, it may be necessary to deliver information for citizens very quickly in response to an emergency situation. This may mean it is not possible to involve people with learning disabilities in the commissioning process or testing the specific product. However, many organisations that produce Easy Read employ or involve people with learning disabilities as part of their own in-house quality testing process. These organisations can use this process whilst creating Easy Read, even with short timescales.

Case study: emergency health campaign

In response to the swine flu outbreak in 2009 the Department of Health (DH) launched a campaign to raise awareness amongst the UK public about how people should protect themselves against swine flu and slow its spread.

Communications included a national door-drop and range of leaflets. These were produced in a range of alternative formats including Easy Read.

To ensure the information was available quickly it was not possible to test the Easy Read leaflet with people with learning disabilities. However, the team working on the Easy Read leaflet had worked on similar Easy Read products for DH before, such as those around seasonal flu. The team incorporated what they had previously learned to ensure the swine flu information was accessible to the target audience.

4.3 Where organisations are commissioning Easy Read for a new, unknown group of people, it is strongly recommended that people with learning disabilities and their supporters or carers, are fully involved in the commissioning and production process.

4.4   Key questions to ask potential providers when commissioning work include:

- how are people with learning disabilities involved in the organisation itself? How many are employed or working in a paid capacity?

- how are people with learning disabilities involved in creating or testing the Easy Read information?

Working with groups or boards

4.5   Where a specific group or board has regular members with learning disabilities, it is good practice to ask how members prefer to receive information. Alternative formats such as presentations or DVDs may be preferred to Easy Read.

4.6   Where information is routinely produced for regular meetings with a specific group (for example, a local Partnership Board or a national steering group), it is important to get regular feedback from the individuals involved and their supporters or carers, to ensure the Easy Read material is meeting their needs. This is a useful quality assurance process.

Case study: creating an image bank

The Legal Services Commission (LSC) set up a Client Diversity Group to seek views from a range of clients on access to legal aid services.
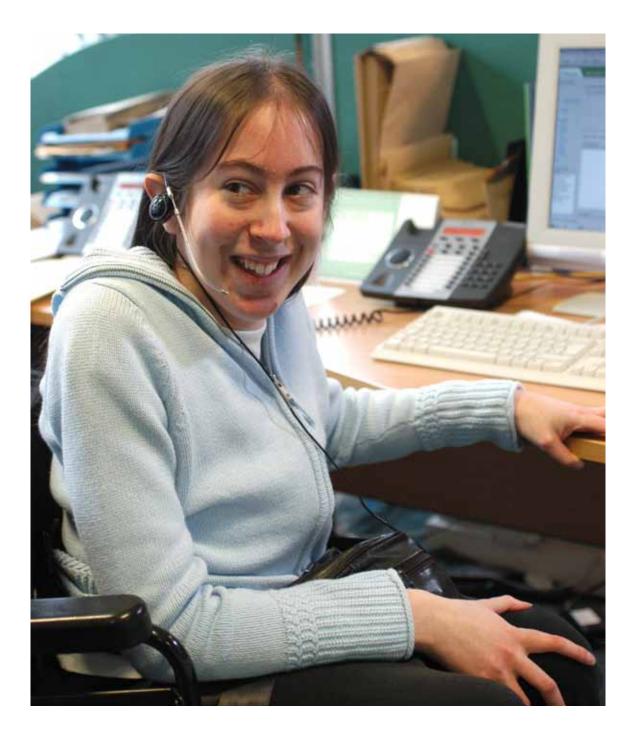
At the group's first meeting, one member who has a learning disability said that he found legal jargon difficult to understand. He suggested that the group make an Easy Read Legal Aid Dictionary. The LSC decided to commission an image bank of illustrations about legal aid and the legal process.

The group chose words that are commonly used or have double meanings, such as 'custody', which could be criminal detention or having responsibility for a child. The pictures and definitions were tested with a group of people with learning disabilities.

The image bank means the LSC has a ready made source of images and house style for producing information in Easy Read. It means the turn around time for documents is quicker and costs are lower. The image bank can also be used by other parts of the justice system, because they've made it available to others for free.

You can view the image bank here: www.inspiredservices.org.uk/freelogin.html

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5. Using other formats

Using other formats

5.1   Easy Read may not always be the most appropriate format for the group of people you are targeting. If your communications is based on audience insight, you should be able to identify the most appropriate methods. If you have involved people with learning disabilities, they will be able to guide you to the most appropriate method.

5.2   Other common methods for sharing information with people with learning disabilities are described below.

5.3   **Audio**
Cassettes and CDs are popular among people with learning disabilities as they allow independent access to information (that is, without a support worker). Audio formats are commonly produced alongside printed information. CD has the advantage over cassette of being easier to navigate. The majority of people use CDs, however occasional requests for cassettes are still made. Once you have an audio version, it is also easy to add an mp3 to your website.

5.4   **Video/DVD**
Video and DVD can be useful formats for easy information as many people with learning disabilities are familiar with and enjoy watching TV and video. It also removes the barrier of the written word by being a visual and aural medium. Video can make positive use of role models and is a good way to bring information to life.

Case study: delivering information in video

Ealing Mencap is a local group that provides services to people with learning disabilities. One of the services they offer is employment support and life skills training, through classroom-based and practical activities through the Supercare and Work Foundations projects.

Ealing Mencap wanted to tell local people with a learning disability about their services and decided to make a short video. The group felt that easy words and pictures or photographs couldn't always convey what their activities involved. They decided that a video could effectively show how people with learning disabilities could take part.

The film was narrated by a woman with learning disabilities and focuses on her involvement in a Market Craft activity, where she makes products and later sells them at the market. She also introduces the staff. It was made by a group of people with learning disabilities, with staff support. Because people with a range of learning disabilities were involved in making the film, the group is confident that the film is accessible to everyone.

5.5 **Interactive CD-ROMs or web pages**
These formats give visual and audio cues that aid comprehension and memory, allowing independent access to information. Moving images in particular can engage and involve people with learning disabilities in accessing information. You can also consider photostories to explain a policy or procedure.

5.6 General information on alternative formats is available on ODI's website: www.odi.gov.uk/formats

Annex A:
Guidelines for producing Easy Read

About these guidelines

Valuing People Now worked with the COI Informability Team and people with learning disabilities to develop these guidelines.

These guidelines are recommended when producing information for people with learning disabilities. They are accompanied by supplementary information for professional typesetters.

1.   Explaining concepts

- Each main idea needs both words and pictures. You do not have to put a picture against every single sentence.

- Pictures go next to the accompanying text – this helps more people understand the information.

- Make sure the link between the pictures and text is clear.

- With longer documents, you could note at the beginning of the document that the reader doesn't have to read the whole publication and that they can ask for support reading it.

- Important dates to be highlighted at the beginning of the document. For instance, the closing date of a consultation or the date that a response is needed to a letter.

- Break up text and highlight important points. You could break up or highlight the text with:

  - bullet points

  - boxed text

  - emboldened text

But beware of using too many sets of bullet points close together.

2.   Pictures

- Make sure pictures are easy to understand and reflect the main points being made. Pictures are there to support and help explain the text. Too many pictures against one short paragraph can be confusing.

- Pictures to be positioned to the left of the text.

- Pictures can be drawings, photographs or other images. If possible, check with your audience what they prefer, as some people with learning disabilities have a preference. Only use one style throughout the document.

- Make sure pictures are as big and as clear as possible (use high resolution images or photographs). Pictures in colour are preferable. Minimise the use of words in pictures.

3.   Words and content

- Make sure words and sentences are easy to understand. Avoid jargon or complicated words as much as possible

- If you have to use difficult words (e.g. when explaining a new concept, such as personalisation) define what the words mean using easy words.

- Explain difficult words the first time they appear and highlight them. This explanation should immediately follow the sentence containing the word. For instance, when explaining what a delivery plan is you could say:

> A **delivery plan** shows what we are going to do to make something happen.

You could box out (as shown above) these explanations just after the sentence so that the reader does not forget the context.

- It is good practice to insert a list of difficult words at the back of the document.

- It is best not to use acronyms or abbreviations, but sometimes, if they are well known by your target audience, they can be used. You should use the full title the first time the word or title appears.

- Words to be written clearly, a sans serif or Arial font could be used.

- Use a big font size – a minimum of 16 point is recommended with bigger font sizes for headings.

4. Grammar, punctuation and numbers

- Traditional rules of grammar need not necessarily apply. Use language that sounds natural when spoken. For example, it's fine to end a sentence with a preposition or start one with 'and' or 'but'.

- Full stops are fine but avoid using too much or difficult punctuation, such as colons.

- Use commas to separate items in a list in preference to semi colons.

- Do not use contractions and avoid apostrophes, except where they indicate possession.

- Never use hyphens to break words at the end of lines – always start a new line. But do use hyphens for words such as well-being.

- Repetition is better than variety. Use the same word or form of words when referring to the same thing. You can also introduce sentences on the same topic with the same form of words.

- Say half, a quarter, 1 in 5 in preference to percentages.

- When referring to percentages, say 67 out of 100 where possible or per cent (rather than the symbol %) where it is not. Use whole numbers, so 7 per cent is better than 6.8 per cent, unless the sense demands greater accuracy.

- Express all numbers in figures, including 1 to 10. However, for millions say 3 million, 20 million etc.

- Dates should follow the format Saturday 31 July 2010. Do not abbreviate the year to 10.

- There is no firm rule on times of the day apart from avoiding the 24 hour clock. You may decide to use am and pm, for example 8am to 6pm. Pictures using analogue or digital clocks help explain the time.

5. Overall layout

- Avoid using questions as people with learning disabilities are often weary of questions.

- Start new chapters or topics on a new page.

6.   Length

- Each document to be as short as possible. More than 20 pages is generally too long.

- Include a contents list in longer documents.

- Each sentence to be as short as possible. More than 15 words is harder to read.

7.   Colour schemes

- Words need to show up against the background clearly. It is best to print black text against a white or light cream background or white text against a very dark background. The organisation you commission should be able to advise on accessible colour schemes. You can also consult the RNIB's 'See It Right' guidelines: www.rnib.org.uk/seeitright

- Sometimes, individuals will require different colour schemes. For example someone with a visual impairment or who is colour blind may need an alternative background. You should produce alternative colour schemes when requested.

- You could use colours as borders to show different topics on the document or agenda. But avoid using traffic light colours: green, orange and red normally denotes good, ok or bad.

8.   Use of photos

- Using photos of real people sometimes works really well but always seek and obtain explicit permission from the individuals in the photo and/or the copyright holders before using them.

- Photographs featuring positive images of disabled people are available free of charge to UK government organisations on the ODI's website. Visit www.odi.gov.uk/communications to find out more.

- When a document is introduced by a foreword, from a Minister or other senior figure, always include their photograph. When you are preparing an agenda for a meeting, photographs of speakers or delegates will be helpful to the reader.

9.   Checking with the audience

- Once you have completed the documents in draft, read what you have written aloud. This will help you test whether it sounds natural.

- Ask people with learning disabilities what they think and if they understand the document before it is published.

Annex B:
Supplementary guidelines for professional typesetting and printing of Easy Read

About these guidelines

These guidelines may be useful for people choosing an organisation to produce Easy Read. Experienced Easy Read producers will be aware of many of the requirements outlined below, as they are common features of Easy Read. Commissioners should feel free to provide them with a copy of these guidelines.

1.   Pictures

- Illustrations should be as large and clear as possible, people with learning disabilities may also have a visual impairment.

- Illustrations should be simple and easy to understand, but not patronising. They should take into account that they are being used by adults (unless, the intended audience is children with learning disabilities).

- You should avoid pictures with a negative symbol, such as a no-smoking sign with a cigarette crossed out. People with learning disabilities find these confusing.

- As with text, repetition reinforces messages, so there is no harm in using the same illustration several times, even on the same spread if necessary.

- Don't use the same illustration to support two different ideas in the same document.

- Illustrations should be representative of the population and recognise diversity – including age, disability, ethnicity, faith and gender. Your pictures should represent the readers of your document.

2.   Colours

- Using colours will make it easier to understand and remember information.

3.   Layout and design

- When producing an Easy Read version of a full document (such as a new policy or major publication) you should consider whether the front cover reflects the standard document's design and imagery. A common or recognisable design is helpful to show that one is related to the other. You may also publish a suite of documents that share a common theme and design. Using a common colour scheme is one way of doing this.

- However, if any two front covers look too similar, people with learning disabilities may get confused about what they are looking at and which version they need to read. Make sure there are clear distinctions. You may choose, for example, to select pictures from within the document itself for the front cover, such as an Easy Read illustration.

- Ensure good contrast, this usually means black or a very dark colour on a white or cream background.

- Consider colour coding and/or running headings or footers in longer booklets (those over 20–24 pages) to help navigation. Use the same colours as the contents list.

- Start new chapters or topics on a new page.

4.   Text

- Be consistent and logical in laying out text and illustrations. It should be clear in which order blocks of text should be read and which illustration relates to which block of text.

- Don't wrap text around or run text across pictures.

- Keep lines of body text to similar lengths.

- Left align all text.

- Use a sans serif or Arial typeface.

- Use adequate leading between lines of text and bullet points and allow plenty of white space around blocks of text.

- Allow enough space between lines of text and bullet points to clearly separate different ideas or statements.

- Use the following conventions for bullet points:

  - Use capital letters at the start of lists with longer entries, or include full stops within the bullet point.

- Use bullet points to help break up text and highlight important points.
- Bullet points are preferable to numbered lists, but when using a numbered list, use large numbers.
- Do not use 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc as this can be confusing.

- Use lower case at the start of single word lists or very short entries, for example:
  - cats
  - long-haired dogs
  - horses.

  The final bullet point, regardless of length, should have a full stop to indicate the end of the list.

- Use large folio numbers (minimum 16 point).
- Try to keep related information on a single spread. If information runs over, consider using running headers/footers to help readers remember what the text relates to.
- Within the text, highlight the words that appear in the glossary in a different colour and embolden them.
- It is usually only necessary to highlight a word that appears in the glossary, the first time it appears on a spread.
- Use bold, never italics, for emphasis. Bold and highlighted words should be used with caution. If there are too many on a page it can be distracting or intimidating.
- Do not use block capitals in text or headings.
- Where the booklet includes space for writing allow enough space for large handwriting.

5. Contents and meaning

- Include a clear contents list and a title that people will understand e.g. **What is in this booklet?**
- Always include dot leaders (or use tint panels or rules) to link text to page numbers in contents lists.

- Use headings that clearly indicate what each section is about.

- Include a glossary at the end of the document, as well as, not as an alternative to, explaining difficult words within the text.

6. Online documents

- Documents should always be provided in a PDF format.

- PDFs should be technically accessible. Images or illustrations should always be 'tagged' with appropriate labels that are also in plain English. Your supplier should be able to do this, find out more on the ODI website: www.odi.gov.uk/publishing. Guidance is also available from Adobe on making PDFs accessible.

7. Printing and paper

- Documents should always be printed on matt paper stock. This will prevent glare on the pages that makes it difficult for people with learning disabilities and others (people with visual impairments or dyslexia) to read.

Annex C:
Useful documents or websites

Easy Info website

www.easyinfo.org.uk
This is a website about making information easier for people with learning disabilities.

Inclusive communications

The Office for Disability Issues has the following online resources which you may find useful. Visit www.odi.gov.uk/commmunications to find out more.

- **Delivering inclusive communications**
  ODI published a short booklet to guide communicators through developing and delivering inclusive communications. It explains your legal duties, how to represent disabled people and make your communications accessible.

- **Office for Disability Issues image library**
  ODI has a free image library that UK government organisations can use.

Improving Information for Disabled People

These documents are also available on ODI's website: www.odi.gov.uk/fiveprinciples

- **Five principles for producing better information for disabled people**
  ODI has developed five core information principles. These principles are essential to make sure that services and information are designed and delivered to a high standard.

- **Producing better information for disabled people: a toolkit for local government**
  The toolkit encourages councils to involve disabled people, produce accessible information, test their products, signpost to other services and have a disability champion. Other public bodies may also find it useful.

- **Accessible information: the business case for senior civil servants**
  This document sets out the business case for accessible information provision to senior civil servants, relating it to their wider strategic objectives whilst making a real difference to people's lives.

Make it clear standards

This publication by Mencap explains how to create Easy Read. It is available on their website: www.mencap.org.uk/document.asp?id=1579&audGroup=&subjectLevel2=&subjectId=&sorter=1&origin=pageType&pageType=112&pageno=&searchPhrase=

Mencap can provide information and advice on Easy Read materials. Email accessibility@mencap.org.uk to find out more.

How to Make Information Accessible

This publication by Change explains how to make information accessible to people with learning disabilities.
www.changepeople.co.uk/productDetails.php?id=2010&type=3

RNIB See It Right guidelines

RNIB has guidelines for producing information for visually impaired people. Their See It Right guidelines and tips for clear print are particularly valuable when producing information for all disabled people.

Visit the accessible information section of their website: www.rnib.org.uk/seeitright

COI Informability team

The COI Informability team advise on all aspects of making information accessible and produce Easy Read documents in house. Email informability@coi.gsi.gov.uk to find out more.

Some examples of Easy Read

Department of Health

- Valuing People Now Easy Read Version: a new three year strategy for people with learning disabilities
www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_093374.pdf

- Important information about swine flu
www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_178687.pdf

Communities and Local Government

- Single Equality Scheme 2010-2013
  www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1638989.pdf

Office for Disability Issues

- International agreement on the rights of disabled people
  www.officefordisability.gov.uk/docs/wor/uncon/easy-read-un-convention.pdf

Government Equality Office

- The Equality Act, making equality real
  www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/GEO%20-%20Equality%20Act%20easy%20
  read%20ROYAL%20ASSENT%20PRINT%20VERSION.pdf

DH Department
of Health