

# Basic guidelines for people who commission Easy Read information



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# The Guidelines

## Introduction

This document is a set of basic guidelines for people commissioning information in Easy Read. It has been created on behalf of the Valuing People Now Team and is intended to act as a recommended guideline across government. It builds upon the Disability Rights Commission's guidelines for the production of Easy Read: *How to use Easy Words and Pictures*.<sup>1</sup>

**If you have any comments on these standards or would like to propose any amendments please email [gwilym@pollinationcampaigns.co.uk](mailto:gwilym@pollinationcampaigns.co.uk)**

**These standards will be reviewed again in March 2010.**

## What is Easy Read?

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

- making information easier
- easier to understand information
- simple words and pictures
- easy write
- easy info.

There is not a legal definition of what Easy Read information must look like. However, a minimum standard for Easy Read information has been created in consultation with people who regularly make or commission Easy Read information. This is included at the end of this document in Annex A.

## What are these guidelines for?

These guidelines have been created to help introduce a minimum standard for the production of Easy Read.

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<sup>1</sup> Disability Rights Commission, 2006

A minimum standard is important because there are lots of companies, charities and individuals all producing their own versions of Easy Read, resulting in a number of different styles. The differences between the styles can create barriers for people with learning disabilities, as they and their supporters have to switch from one style to another. This can be confusing.

A lack of a minimum standard has also meant that some Easy Read information has not met the needs of people with learning disabilities. As a result of both these issues, people with learning disabilities have been excluded from information they have a right to.

## Common sense

These are very basic guidelines and are designed to support a minimum standard for Easy Read information. Some organisations go much further in describing how they commission Easy Read information. This guidance should not replace that good practice.

The standards themselves are also very simple and adaptable. We want to retain the flexibility for people creating Easy Read information to meet the needs of specific individuals and communities – the strength of Easy Read is that it can be adapted to its audience.

## Easy Read is not always the answer

Easy Read is not the only way to communicate with people with learning disabilities. Sometimes video, talks, presentations, drama, murals, role-play or posters can be better ways of communicating complex or sensitive information.

Easy Read is a tool for increasing the number of people with learning disabilities who can access information. It should be remembered, however, that not every person with a learning disability is able to use Easy Read; many people with learning disabilities will require additional support to access information, via support workers or carers, and some may also require information in audio or video formats.

## Guiding principles

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 information for people with learning disabilities.

These guiding principles are as follows:

1. Ensure that people with learning disabilities are involved from the start.
2. Provide information through a range of channels and formats.
3. Ensure that 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 principles for producing better information for disabled people*, available from the ODI's website at [www.officefordisability.gov.uk/workingimprovinginformation.asp](http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/workingimprovinginformation.asp) and in hard copy from [office-for-disability-issues@dwp.gsi.gov.uk/](mailto:office-for-disability-issues@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Disability Equality Duty

Public authorities should also take into consideration their Disability Equality Duty<sup>2</sup> as set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. For example, public authorities now have a proactive duty to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than non-disabled people. In many cases this will involve ensuring that disabled people have equal access to information.

## Planning questions

Before you decide to commission a supplier to create Easy Read information, you need to answer some questions. These will help you to go about the commissioning process.

### Why are you producing Easy Read information?

- Is there a document you want to make Easy Read?
- Do you want to tell a group of people with learning disabilities something?

### Who exactly is the Easy Read document for?

- Is the information for people coming to a meeting who all know each other, or is it information for a big group of people across the country?
- Do you already know the communication needs of the people it is aimed at?

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<sup>2</sup> [www.dotheduty.org](http://www.dotheduty.org)

## What is the Easy Read document for?

- Does it explain an idea, tell someone something new or help someone to think about something?

## How will people with learning disabilities use the information?

- Will they read it once or will they keep it for a long time?

If you are creating an alternative format of a document, you need to decide whether producing a document in Easy Read is the best way of communicating that information to people with learning disabilities.

## How to go about commissioning Easy Read information

Once you have answered the above questions you are in a position to start thinking about the type of organisation you would like to produce the information. Often this will be through a competitive tendering process or through setting up a framework agreement with a number of suppliers.

You should think carefully about how you are going to ask potential suppliers to go through this process, because many of these organisations will be run or managed by people with learning disabilities. You may need to put in additional support to enable these kinds of organisations to tender for the work.

It is a good idea to make sure that you use your planning questions (and your own answers) to shape the questions you will ask potential suppliers. This is because one supplier might be better than another at producing the type of information you require. Your questions need to be specific and to relate to your requirements so you can judge who is best.

## Choosing an organisation to produce Easy Read information

There are many different types of organisations that produce Easy Read information. They include small companies, voluntary groups and large disability organisations. Many have their own area of expertise. Some specialise in producing glossy booklets, others are good at certain subjects like health or education and some work locally.

There is no nationally recognised system of accreditation for organisations that create Easy Read information, so it is important to find out if the organisations you are thinking of working with have the right skills and experience.

Checks should include:

- a review of previous work;

- references from previous clients; and
- an understanding of the ‘social model’ of disability and an appreciation of the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

## Working with people with learning disabilities

It is very important to ask an organisation to set out how they work with people with learning disabilities. Key questions should include:

- How are people with learning disabilities involved in the organisation?
- How are people with learning disabilities involved in creating the Easy Read information?
- Are people with learning disabilities paid a decent wage for their involvement in the process?

# Annex A: Standards for organisations that produce Easy Read information

## What are standards?

These standards are rules that can help when making information Easy Read.

## What is Easy Read information?

Easy Read information is sometimes called ‘easier information’ or ‘simple words and pictures’.

It is a way of making information easier to read and understand for people with learning disabilities.

## Why do we need rules?

- Rules for Easy Read information will help people with learning disabilities.
- At the moment, all the people who make Easy Read information have their own way of doing things.
- This can make it hard for people with learning disabilities because different pieces of Easy Read information can look very different.
- Sometimes people do not do a good job when making information Easy Read.
- These rules will help them to do a better job.

## Words and pictures

Rule 1: Each idea needs both words and pictures – both pictures and words are important.

Rule 2: Pictures and words go next to each other – this helps more people to understand the information.

Rule 3: Make sure that it is clear which pictures support which bits of text.

## Pictures

Rule 4: Pictures must be easy to understand.

Rule 5: Pictures should go on the left.

Rule 6: Pictures can be drawings, photographs or other images.

Rule 7: Make sure that pictures are as big as possible.

## Words

Rule 8: Words must be easy to understand.

Rule 9: If you use difficult words, say what they mean using easy words.

Rule 10: Words go on the right.

Rule 11: Words must be written clearly – a font like Arial is good.

Rule 12: Words must be big – a font size of at least 14 point is good.

## Length

Rule 13: Each sentence must be short as possible – more than 15 words is harder to read.

Rule 14: Each document must be short – more than 20 pages is too long.







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