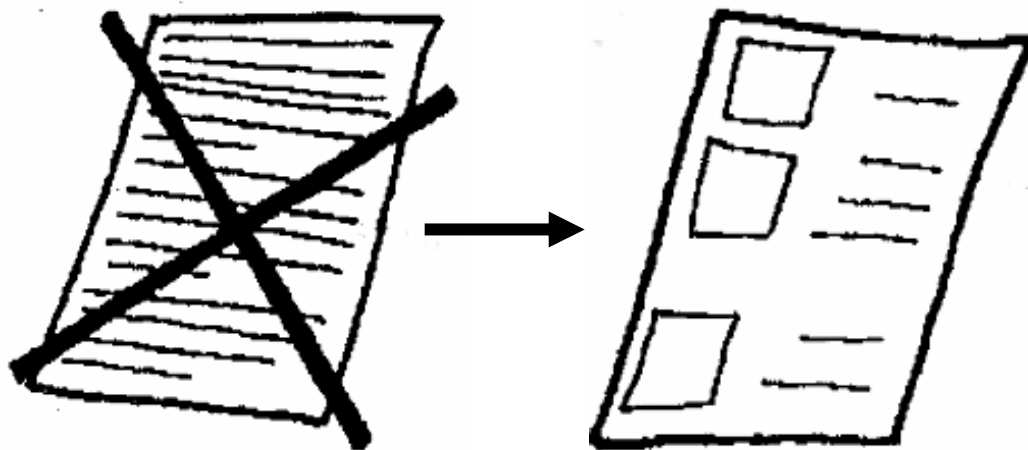


Accessibility Guidelines

How to make written information
easier to understand



Produced by :
The Speech and Language Therapy Department
Adult Learning Disabilities Team
Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust

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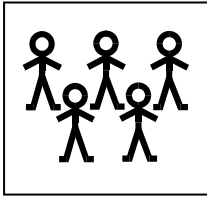
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Where we got our information
from

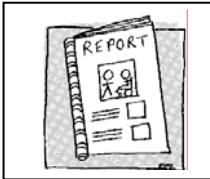
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Guidelines for making written information easy to understand

These guidelines are for anybody who needs to give written information to large groups of people. This could be:-



- agendas
- minutes



- reports
- leaflets



- appointment cards
- letters

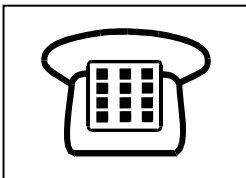
To write these guidelines we included advice from:



- organisations like Mencap, People First, Plain English Campaign
- people with disabilities



- the Speech and Language Therapy Team from Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust



If you have any questions about the guidelines you can contact the Speech and Language Therapy Team on 0116 2255294.

Planning your information

Choose the best way to get the information across

Here are some ways that you could use:

- Audiotape
- Video
- Talks / Presentations
- Meetings
- Drama
- Internet
- Written, for example leaflets, minutes, reports, letters
- Posters

You could use 1 or more of these together.

The following guidelines will help when you have decided to use written information to get your message across.

Only include important and relevant information.

Think carefully about:

- What your audience already knows
- Exactly what you want to get across
- What you want your audience to do with the information.

Put points in an order that makes the most sense

- List the points you need to make
- Decide what information goes under each point

Try to write points in order of importance and/or in the order in which things happen.

Using easy words

4

Use everyday words wherever possible;

Examples

Use “home” rather than “residence”

Use “change” rather than “amend”

Use a specific word or words rather than a general one.

Example

Use “wine, beer and whiskey” rather than “alcohol”.

Use “going bowling, “going to the swimming pool”, rather than hobbies.

Avoid abbreviations.

Some examples of abbreviations are

CPA – Care Programme Approach

SALT – Speech and Language Therapist

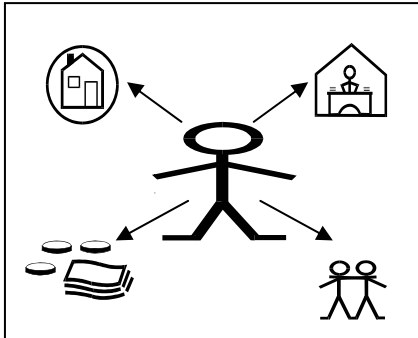
PCP – Person Centred Plan

Using the full name for something will make your information much easier to understand.

For example see page 7

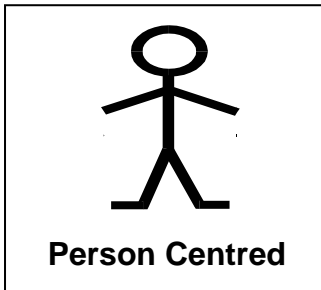


What is Person Centred Planning?



Person Centred Planning is a way for you to say what you want in your life.

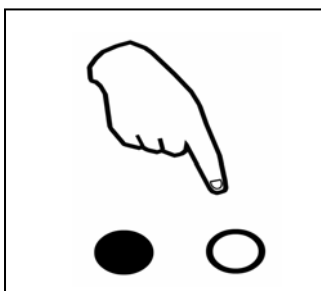
You have a choice to



1. have a Person Centred Plan



2. not have a Person Centred Plan



I'm going to tell you about Person Centred Planning to help you choose.

Use the name instead of the pronoun e.g. “the nurse” rather than “he”.

A pronoun (e.g. he, she, they, it, him, her, them) is harder to understand than the name. Wherever possible use the name instead of the pronoun.

Rather than

“The physiotherapist will give you some exercises to do. She will check if you are doing them right.”

Say

“The physiotherapist will give you some exercises to do. The physiotherapist will check if you are doing the exercises right”.

For numbers write the number not the word.

Rather than writing

“sixty six”

write

“66”

Using easy sentences

Use short sentences.

- Use 20 words or less in a sentence. Aim to use less than 15.
- Put just 1 main idea in each sentence.
- Split longer sentences down into shorter, more manageable ones.

Rather than

“Exercise can make you feel tired but there is no need to worry about this because this is okay”.

Say

“Exercise can make you tired. Feeling tired is okay.”

If possible use sentences that say what will happen rather than what won't happen.

Rather than

“You will not have to fill in this form on your own”.

Say

“Someone will help you fill in this form”.

rather than

“it is not unusual to have to wait to see the doctor”.

say

“you may have to wait to see the doctor”.

Be direct and ‘talk’ to your reader.

Say exactly who will do what.

Examples

Rather than

“A letter will be sent”.

Say

“The college will send you a letter”.

Rather than

“You will be called when it is your turn”.

Say

“The nurse will call you when it is your turn”.

These type of sentences are much easier to understand.

Using pictures

Use pictures with a clear meaning

Use specific rather than general pictures

Examples

Use



hot drink

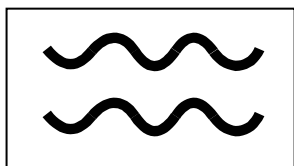


hot day



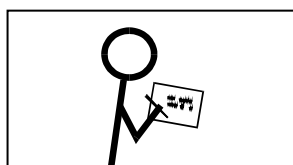
hot food

rather than



hot

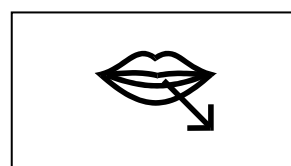
use



writing

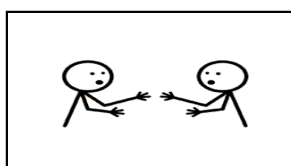


signing



talking

rather than

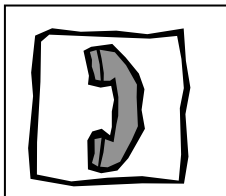


communication

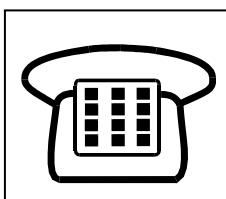
Use pictures that look like the thing you are talking about

Examples

If you are talking about a telephone
Rather than



Use

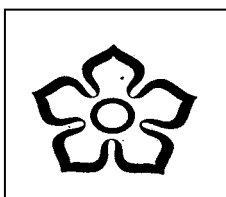


- Where this is not possible use the same picture all the time

Examples



Leicester College

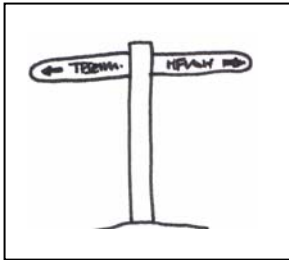


Leicester City Council

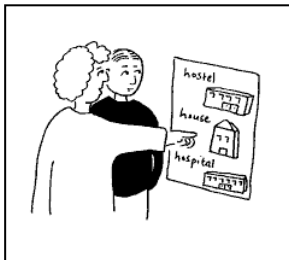
- Use a picture that is meaningful for the person or group
e.g.

Choosing where to live

Rather than



Use

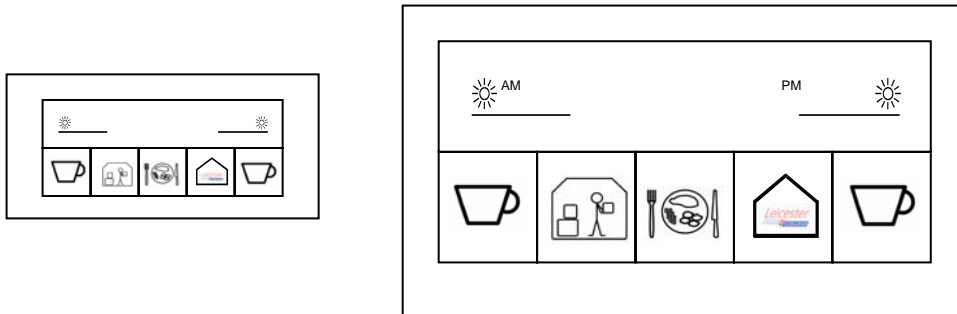


Use pictures that are easy to see.

To make the pictures easy to see, think about these things:

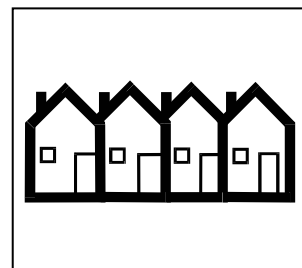
- **Size of the pictures**

If pictures are too small they may be difficult for people to see



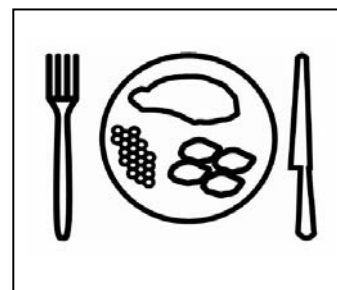
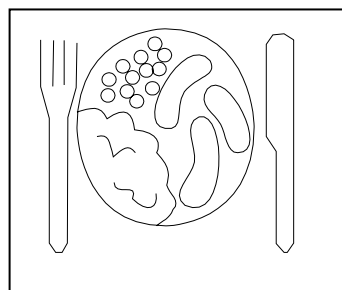
- **The amount of lines in the picture**

A lot of lines or detail can make pictures difficult to understand



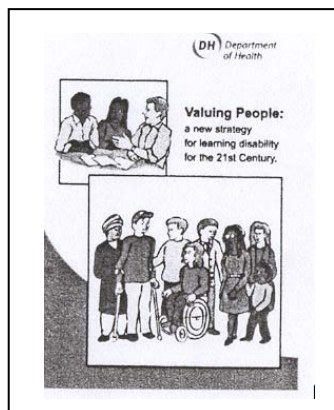
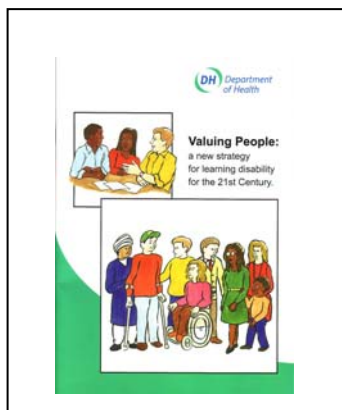
- **Thickness of the lines**

Pictures with thicker lines are easier to see and understand than pictures with thin or 'sketchy' lines.



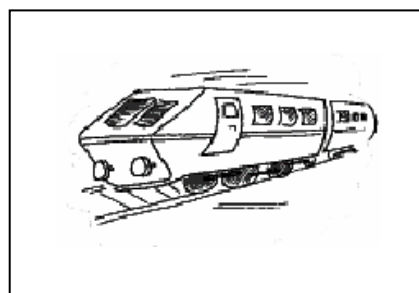
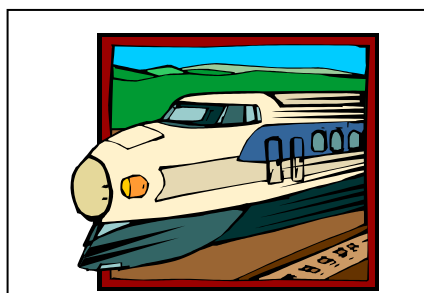
Colour

Make sure you print or photocopy colour pictures in colour.



- **Contrast**

The lines of the picture need to stand out from the background. Black and white pictures will be easy to see for most people



- **Finish**

A shiny paper can reflect light and make pictures difficult to see. Matt paper is better. If you are laminating papers use matt laminating pouches.

Presenting your information clearly

Use headings, sections and short paragraphs

It is important to try to break up the writing.

To help you to do this

Use: headings
sections
short paragraphs
bullet points
clear spacing

Lay Out Information Clearly

Make the layout easy to follow and easy to see.

- For most documents such as leaflets, reports, letters, meeting minutes put pictures on the left and writing on the right.
- Have plenty of white space all the way around pictures.
- Don't have too many pictures on a page. Too many pictures can be confusing.
- Consider using boxes around pictures. It's easier to see which bit of writing goes with which picture. Boxes can make it clear which picture goes with which bit of writing.

Here's an example of how to present information more clearly.

For the introduction to these guidelines we started off with this:-

Guidelines about making written information easy to understand.

These guidelines are for anyone who needs to give written information to large groups of people, for example:- agendas, minutes, reports, leaflets, health information, standard letters and appointment cards.

To write these guidelines we included advice from organisations like Mencap, People First, Plain English Campaign, people with disabilities, the Speech and Language Therapy team from Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust.

If you have any questions about the guidelines you can contact the Speech and Language Therapy Team on 0116 2255294.

See page 1 for how it looks now

Use good quality print.

- Think carefully about how you will make copies of your information
- Try to avoid photocopying as this affects the quality of the print
- Use professional printers wherever possible.

Use black print on white paper unless you know the people reading it need something different.

Black print on a yellow background is best for people who find it hard to see.

Use a clear letter font and style on the computer.

- Use clear fonts like Arial
- Larger font of a least 14
- It may help to use bold

Avoid using all capitals.

Using all capital letters makes writing harder to read.

- try to keep to upper and lower case mixed
- use capitals for the first letter of the first word
- use capitals for the first letter of names

Rather than

“YOUR TABLETS ARE CALLED RISPERIDONE”.

Use

“Your tablets are called Risperidone”.

If an important word needs to stand out, use bold rather than capitals.

Make headings clear.

Use bold for heading rather than underlining. Remember to avoid using all capitals

Rather than

“GOING TO SEE THE DOCTOR”.

Use

“**Going to see the Doctor**”.

Use the easiest leaflet layout.

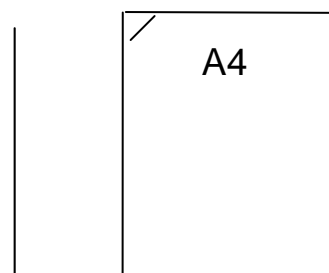
Put the information together so it is clear what order to read it in: -

A lot of people find it easier if information is on 1 page because:

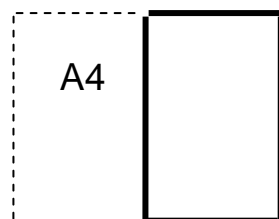
- People can forget to turn over the page to read print on the back.
- It can be confusing to know what order to read folded documents.

Which way is the easiest?

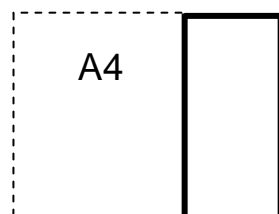
Easiest



- information on 1 side of the page. This way can have more than 1 page in the document. (More than 1 page can be put in the document).



- A4 paper folded in half. Folding this way gives 4 pages of information.



- A4 paper folded in 3. Folding this way usually gives 6 pages of information. It can be difficult to know what order to read the information in.

Most difficult

What the Words in the guidelines mean.

Pictures	photos, symbols, drawings, logos, signage, cartoons, clip art
Symbols	simple picture which are: - easy to draw show 1 or 2 ideas at a time have thicker lines than drawings
Drawings	more complicated than symbols Tell a 'story' Show more than 1 idea
Logos	symbols or simple drawings that stand for charities, companies and other organisations
Signage	words and pictures used as signposts in:- public buildings places roads For example: - ladies/gents museum
Cartoons	line drawings which tell a story. Usually include writing and humour
Clip Art	Pictures from the computer. Usually detailed and coloured. Offer a number of options for 1 word.

Guidelines Checklist

You can use this checklist to:

- help you develop a piece of written information

for example

- letters
 - agendas
 - leaflets
 - minutes
 - reports
 -
- review and evaluate existing written information, making it easier to understand
- audit how easy to understand written information is

Plan your information		Page Number
Have I chosen the best way to get the information across?		2
Have I included important and relevant information?		2
Have I put points in an order that makes the most sense?		3

Use easy words		Page Number
Have I used familiar words?		4
Have I used specific words instead of general ones?		4
Have I avoided jargon?		5
Have I used the same word each time?		5
Have I avoided abbreviations?		6
Have I used the name instead of the pronoun?		8
Have I used the number, not the word?		8

Use easy sentences.		Page number
Are the sentences less than 20 words?		9
Where possible do the sentences say what will happen?		9
Do the sentences 'talk' to the reader?		10

Use pictures		Page number
Do the pictures I've used have a clear meaning?		11
Do the pictures look like the thing I am talking about?		12
Are the pictures big enough?		14
Are the pictures easy to understand? not too many lines? not too detailed? use thick lines?		14
If I have used colour pictures will they be reproduced in colour?		15
Do the lines of the pictures I have used stand out from the background?		15
Have I used matt paper/laminating pouches?		15

Present you information		Page number
Have I used headings? sections? paragraphs?		16
Is the layout easy to follow? clear? see?		16
Is the print quality good?		18
Have I used black print on white paper?		18
Have I used Arial font at least pt 14?		18
Have I used capitals appropriately?		19
Have I used bold for headings?		19
Have I used appropriate leaflets size?		20

We have included information from :-

1. 'Access First: A guide on how to give written information for people with learning difficulties' by People First.
2. A Guide to Using Symbols. The Symbols Working Group.
3. 'The Informability Manual' by Wendy Gregory, HMSO.
4. 'Literacy Through Symbols: Improving Access for Children and Adults' by Tina and Mike Detheridge, David Fulton Publishers.
5. 'Making ourselves clear: Mencap's minimum standards for accessible writing' (leaflet), Mencap.
6. 'Plain English Guide' by Martin Cutts, Oxford £3.99.
7. 'Plain Facts: information about research for people with learning difficulties' by Ruth Townsley and Karen Gyde, Norah Fry Research Centre, Bristol University.
8. 'The Poppi Guide: Practicalities of Providing Patient Information', Mark Dumen and Christine Farrell, publisher Kings Fund 2000.
9. Step by Step procedure for Developing a new Patient Information Leaflet, Leicestershire & Rutland Healthcare Trust.
10. Am I making myself clear, Mencaps Guidelines for Accessible Writing.
11. Making Reading Easier, Basic Skills Agency.
12. 'Information is Power', The Impact of Accessible Information on People with learning difficulties, Ruth Townsley.
13. 'The right to read and write : A straightforward guide to literacy and people with Mental Health in Canada', Roetier Institute (1991).