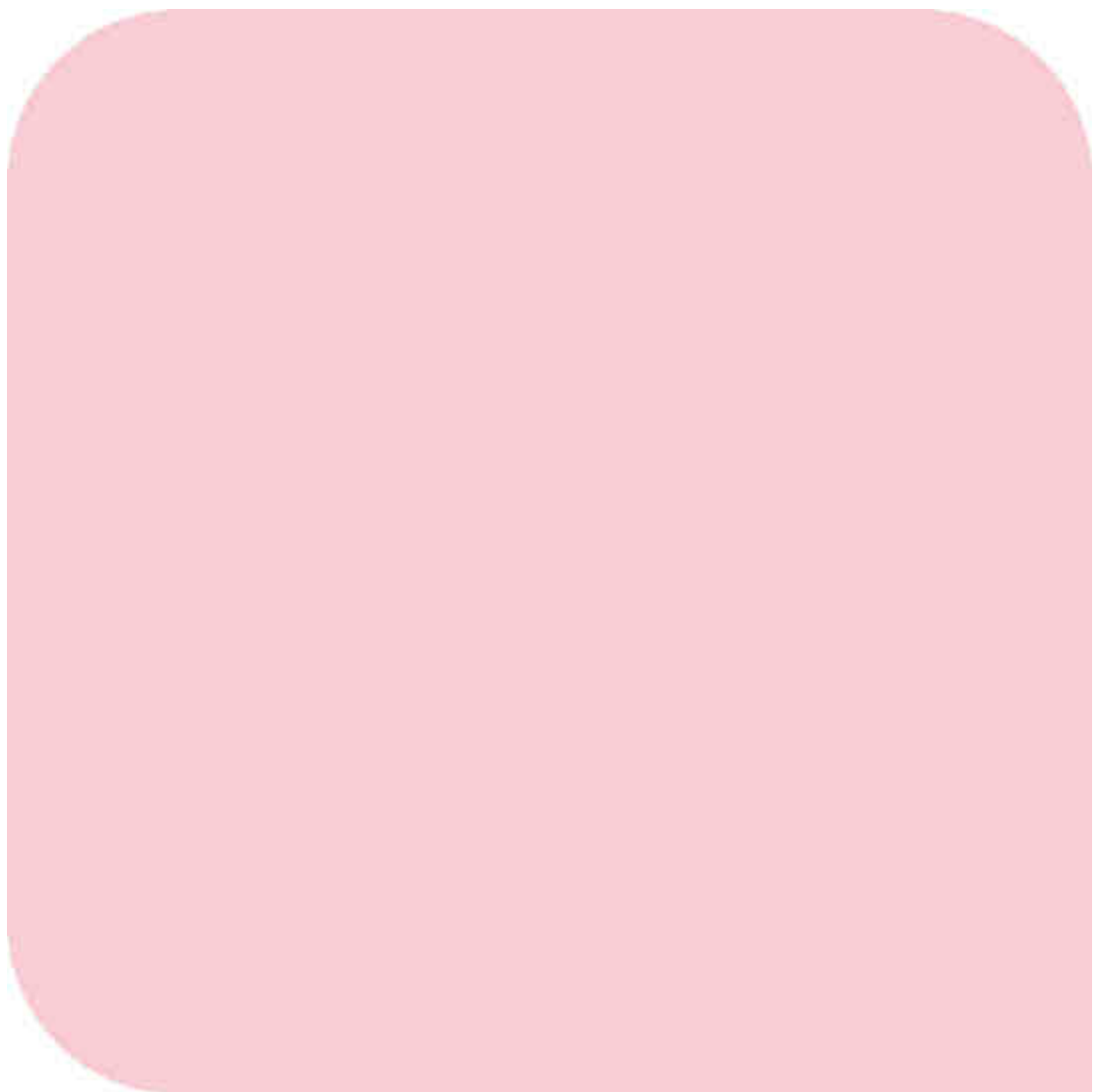


# How to make information accessible





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## Introduction

This paper looks at how to make sure information is as accessible as possible.



The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) tries to make its work and papers accessible when somebody asks or when they already know that someone needs accessible information.



These guidelines start with some general points and then include information about making information more accessible for different groups.



There is information about using words, pictures, photographs, symbols, video, DVD, tape and CD.



SCIE also has guidelines for organising accessible events like conferences and meetings. You can get these from the SCIE website:



[www.scie.org.uk/publications/participation](http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/participation)

# General guidelines on making information accessible

## Presenting information

Use simple words and short sentences. This makes information easier for everyone to understand.



Do not use difficult words. Sometimes this means using more words. This is ok as long as the words are easy to understand.



If you do have to use difficult words put in a 'what the words mean' section.



If it is a long report, put in a summary.



Do not use letters instead of words, for example use 'person-centred planning' instead of PCP.

When you do a newsletter or something you send out each month, keep it the same design each time so people recognise it. But make sure you can give the information to people in different ways, if needed.



Try not to use capital letters LIKE THIS.

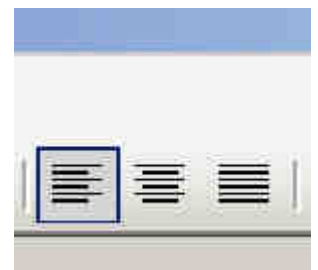
SCIE mostly uses font 'Arial' size 12, like this.

Use size 20 for people with visual impairments and at least size 14 for people with learning difficulties unless you are asked for a different size.



Try not to underline things like this, or use italics *like this*. These things make words harder to read.

Use a ragged right edge rather than fully justified text. This means the ends of lines will not line up but it will be easier to read. Use this button on the tool bar:



Plan what you want to write and keep it simple.





Use words like 'you' and 'we' to help get the message across.



Give out information in different ways when needed, like 'easy read', Braille, tape, CD, video, British Sign Language (BSL), and in different languages.



Where you are using information from another organisation (for example information about a place to hold a meeting) ask them for that information in different ways so that you can pass it on to anyone who needs it.



If they run a service, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) says they have to give out accessible information.



## Using pictures

Pictures can make writing easier to understand and nicer to look at.



There are different types of pictures:

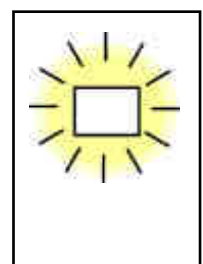
- photographs



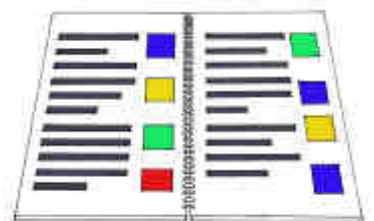
- drawings/clipart



- symbols



Use pictures with your writing. Make sure your papers are easy to understand even if someone cannot read very well.



It is best to stick to one type of picture. Try not to mix photographs, drawings and symbols.

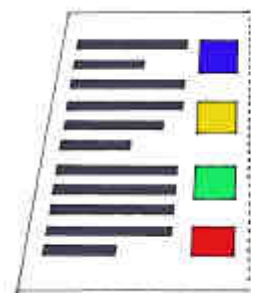
Pictures should show people from different cultures and people with disabilities.



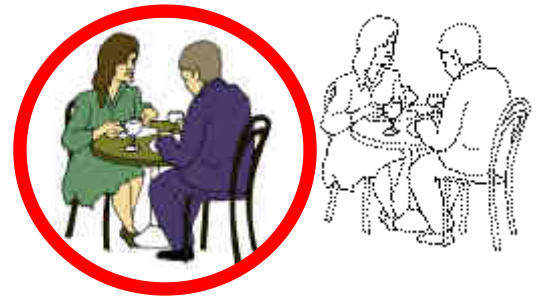
They can also show buildings or people which the person knows.



We think it is a good idea to put your pictures to the right of the words.



People liked coloured pictures better than just black and white pictures.



Drawings must not be childish or talking down to people.



The best drawings are often the simplest. There should not be too much going on in a picture.



Be careful about using jokes to get a message across. Jokes can confuse the message and might also upset some people.



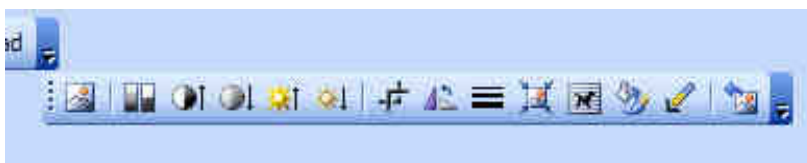
Many people put a photograph of the writer at the end of a letter or article.



Pictures can be put into a word document (on the computer) by going to the 'Insert' menu, to 'Picture' and then clicking on 'From file'.



Then find the picture in the folder in which it is stored, and click on it. It will then be put in and you can change the size and where it is by using the picture toolbar.



If you cannot see this go to 'Tools' and 'Customise', then 'Select picture'.

SCIE is allowed to use the CHANGE picture bank – it can be found through the participation portal on SCIE.net.



## Using photographs

Many people like photographs. A photograph can hold a lot of information and can easily be 'read'.



Photographs can help when talking about a certain person or building.



You must always ask people if it is ok to take or use a photograph of them.



Photographs have to be taken carefully to make sure they just show one idea.

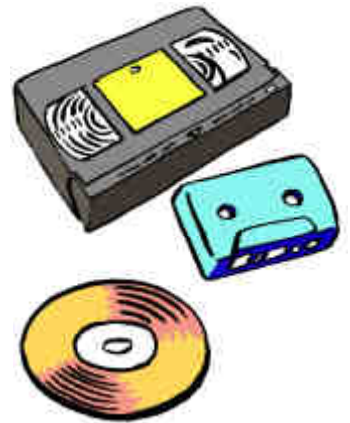


Photographs do not always photocopy very well.

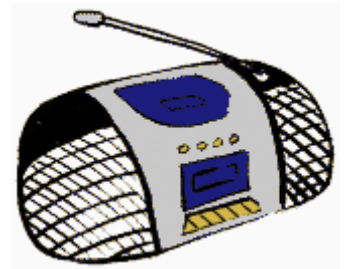


## Using video and sound

Think about putting information on video and CD or cassette tape, especially if you know your users are blind or sight impaired.



Put information on CD. It is easier and cheaper to copy and for people to skip from track to track. CD players can be bought for not much money.



Look into using DVDs rather than videos. DVD players are getting cheaper.



If using cassettes, keep them short.

When one side of the cassette is at an end, say this so the user knows to turn the tape over.





Say numbers in the same way each time. Say zero instead of 'oh'.



When people see a video on CD/DVD it will often be in a small box on the screen. Big close up shots are better than long shots or wide shots.



It is really important to make sure people speak really clearly on CD, cassettes and videos. People might be listening on small computer speakers.



For information on computer, you might want to offer a version that is read out while the words are on the screen.



# Making information accessible for people from black and minority ethnic communities

## Presenting information

Not everyone from one black and minority ethnic community is the same.



Work with people from black and minority ethnic communities to ask them how they want their information set out.



Find out as much as you can about the black or minority ethnic community group that your information is for, so you can make sure it meets their needs. Work with people from those groups to do this.



Do not just put information into another language as it might not make sense. Translations (putting information into a different language) need to look at culture as well as the words.



Use translators and interpreters who have proper training and who understand differences in culture. The translator may use words and pictures to help people to feel that the information is right for them.



Put leaflets into different languages if needed.



## Using video and sound

Think about the voices and music you use – make sure they are right for people.



Videos can be a good way of getting information about health to women from black and minority ethnic communities.



## Using pictures

Make sure people from black and minority ethnic groups are in the pictures you use. Use positive pictures of different people and different cultures.



The way people use pictures changes from one culture to another. Think about who is shown in the picture, whether they are smiling or not, what they are wearing, their body language and what is around them.



Pictures can be used to show which community a person belongs to. Jewellery, what they are wearing and colours can all mean something to people. Small details can help people feel the information is right for their community.



# Making information accessible for people with learning disabilities



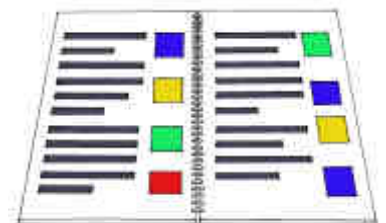
## Presenting information

Many people with learning disabilities read information in what is called 'easy read'. This is an 'easy read' paper.



Easy read means writing things down using short sentences. We try not to use difficult words and letters that stand for something.

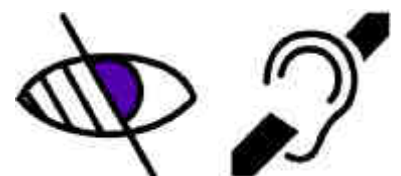
Easy read papers always use pictures to show what the text means.



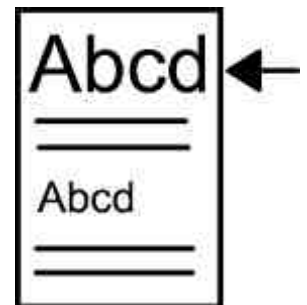
Easy information helps people with learning disabilities to make choices and know their rights.



Lots of people with learning disabilities may also be deaf or hard of hearing or be blind or find it hard to see.



You should use at least font size 14 for people with learning disabilities and font size 20 for people who find it hard to see.



Most people with learning disabilities and visual impairments do not use Braille as it is difficult to use.



It is important to talk to people with learning disabilities. They can make sure you use the right words and pictures.



Put important points in **bold**.

Make sure the writing shows up on the paper. Black text on white or yellow paper is best. Do not use yellow text on white paper or white text in dark boxes.



Use bullet points to break your information up and set it out clearly.

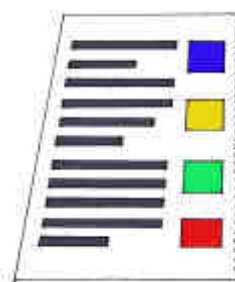


Use story boxes and fact boxes for the main points.

Do not put words over pictures.

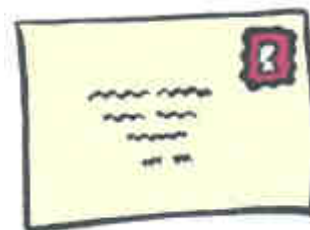


Always start and finish a sentence on the same page.

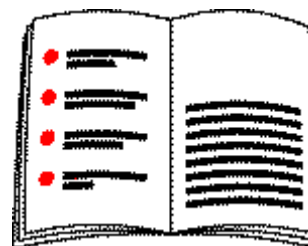


Break the text into short chunks and have a lot of blank space around the text.

Write addresses like they would be on an envelope.



Make sure you put in a clear contents page and titles.



Think about using an A3 format (like a booklet) – you can use larger words and pictures. Check that a bigger document is OK for someone to pick up or hold.



Explain difficult words the first time you use them and put a word list at the back. Make it clear where this can be found.



Keep sentences short. There should be one idea in each sentence. Sentences should not be more than 15 to 20 words long.



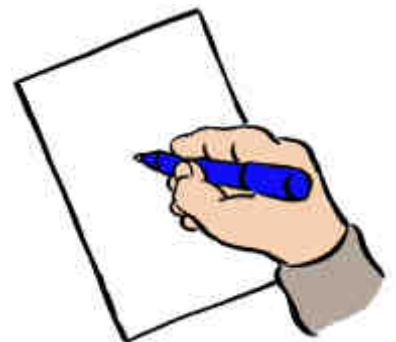
Try not to use semicolons (;), colons (:), and too many commas.

Do not break up words with hyphens at the end of a line.

Use the same words for important ideas each time they come up.



Use the number and not the word. For example, use 3 instead of three. Try not to use percentages (%) or large numbers.



Make it clear if the reader has to do anything, like reply to or fill in a form.

## Using video and audio materials

Where possible, give out a CD with any printed information, so that people can listen to it.



The words must be read slowly and clearly. It should not sound like the person is talking to a child.



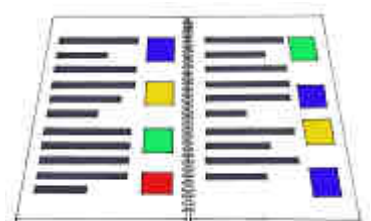
The video or sound should tell the user when to turn the page on the paper copy.

Use music on the video or CD to give the user time to turn the page on their paper copy of the information.



## Using pictures

You should always use pictures when you write information for people with learning difficulties.



There are different ways you can find pictures. You can use photographs or drawings.





You can find a list of picture banks and collections at

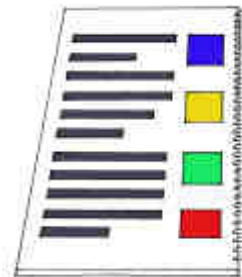


[www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

Pictures should show one idea.



Most people like one picture per paragraph to show the main idea. Choose a picture that best explains the text.



Sometimes you might not be able to find the picture you need, and may need to draw pictures or take photographs yourself.



You could also ask the designers of a clipart or symbol collection like the Valuing People Clipart Collection.



[www.inspiredservices.org.uk](http://www.inspiredservices.org.uk)

## Using photographs

A lot of people like photographs. A photograph can hold a lot of information and can easily be 'read'.



Photographs can help when talking about a certain person or building.



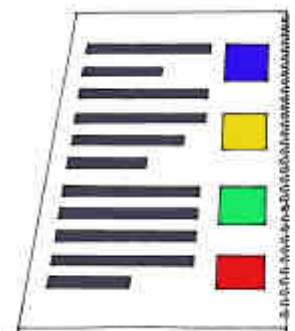
## Using symbols

Do not just use symbols unless you know the readers already know what the symbols mean. Not many adults with a learning disability find it easy to use symbols but this will change as more people learn symbols at school.



Unless a person is used to reading symbols above each word, it is best just to use symbols for main ideas.

Put symbols next to the text, rather than above the words.



Do not just use the first symbol you find –  
choose one that shows what the word means.



Mostly, photographs and pictures are  
better as not everyone uses symbols.



## Making information accessible for deaf and hard of hearing people



### Presenting information

Many deaf and hard of hearing people use British Sign Language (BSL). For people who use BSL, it is their first language rather than English. That is why it is important to keep the information simple.



At meetings and events you should find and pay for a BSL interpreter whenever needed. You can find out more about this in the SCIE guidelines for organising accessible events like conferences and meetings. You can get these from the SCIE website:



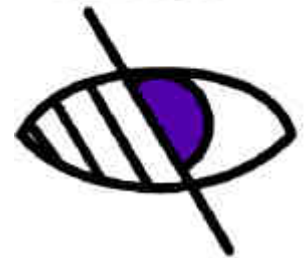
[www.scie.org.uk/publications/participation](http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/participation)

### Using video materials

For people whose first language is BSL, video clips are useful. Leaflets can be put into BSL on video.

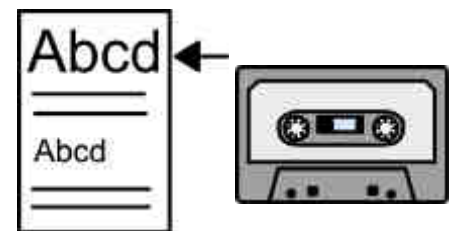


## Making information accessible for people with visual impairments



### Presenting information

People who are visually impaired may need information in Braille, large print or on tape.



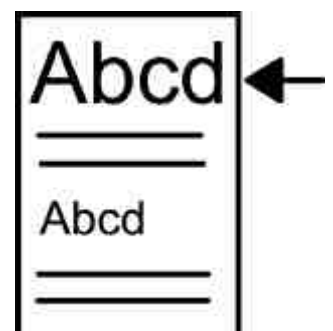
Braille is used by over 20,000 people in the United Kingdom (UK).



Many people prefer information to be read out on tape or more and more on CD.



For people who can see a little bit, use at least font size 20 point. It is best if words are printed on pale yellow or white paper in bold black or dark blue print.



Make sure the writing or pictures show up on the paper.

Use good quality matt paper so that the text on the other side does not show through. The paper should not be shiny.



## Using pictures

Pictures should be big, bold, bright and colourful.



## Making information accessible for older people

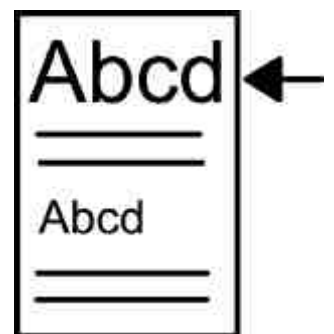


Try not to use blue as it is often harder for older people to read.



Use matt paper rather than shiny paper which makes it hard for older people to read.

Use at least font size 14 and **size 20** for people with visual impairments.



Think about using an A3 format (as an A4 booklet) as you can use larger print and pictures which are easier for people to see.



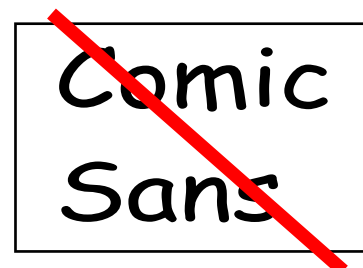
## Making information accessible for children and young people



Think about using coloured writing, but make sure you use colours that can be seen.

# Words

Do not use the font Comic Sans as this is difficult to read. Most people find Arial easier to read.



Think about using cartoons and photographs. This may be better for younger children.



Use easy words.





## Credits

This paper has been designed and produced for SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) by the 'easy read' service at Inspired Services.



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