South Gloucestershire
Learning Difficulties Partnership Board

Make it simple

Contents

Introduction

Everyone should have access to the information they need. It's something that a lot of us take for granted. But access to information can mean the difference between taking control of your life and being left in the dark.

Information is powerful.

People with learning difficulties as a group have a history of being disempowered... If we are serious about wanting to support people [to make choices] then we are going to need to share the power we are used to holding. To share that power means finding out what people need or want to know, making that information available, and finding fresh ways to communicate it.

One of the biggest misconceptions people make when they talk about 'making information accessible' is that they think adding symbols/pictures to a document will make it easier to understand. Unfortunately this is not enough.

As with words, there is an element of learning involved with using pictures. They are not always instantly recognisable, and they are definitely not going to make a badly written document any more accessible.

Basic Points to Follow

Writing Sentences
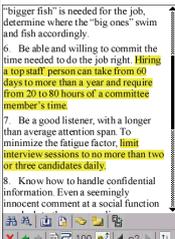
	Go Through the document Highlight the key points Bin the rest!
	You may need to shuffle the order around to make it easier to understand
	Check for jargon. Change or explain complicated words or jargon. (If necessary include a glossary)
	Keep sentences short
	Re-read
	Get someone else to read it, to check that it is easy to understand.
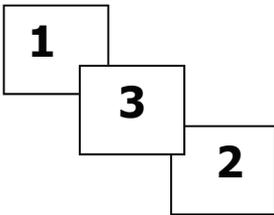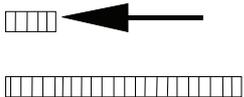
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Layout

typing	Typing is clearer than handwriting
abc **abc**	**Font : Type** Choose fonts without a serif for example, Arial or Tahoma
14 ▼ / 12 / 14 / 16 / 18 / 20	**Type : Size** Use 14 point and above. Ask you service user group how big they want the text, some people need it to be 18 or above.
B I	**Font : Style** Use bold, a different font or a slightly bigger size to highlight headings
WORDS **words**	**Don't write in capitals.** A combination of upper and lower case is best
	Space Don't try to squeeze everything in to fit onto one page. People will be daunted by a full page of text.
	Symbols, illustrations and Photos These are useful at providing clues. Choose a few to highlight key points
	Layout Take the time to make it look appealing. Look at other example that you like and follow the style
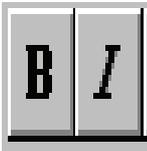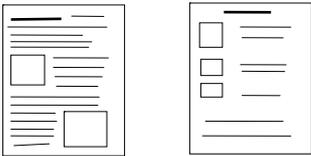
Examples

The next section has before and after examples of some sentences. They're very basic examples but give you an idea of how to break down long and complicated sentences. Once you have the information, you can choose pictures that will help people understand the text.

Before
High-quality learning environments are a necessary precondition for facilitation and enhancement of the ongoing learning process.
After
Children need good schools if they are to learn properly.

Before
If there are any points on which you require explanation or further particulars we shall be glad to furnish such additional details as may be required by telephone.
After
If you have any questions, please phone.

Before
It is important that you shall read the notes, advice and information detailed opposite then complete the form overleaf (all sections) prior to its immediate return to the Council by way of the envelope provided.
After
Please read the notes opposite before you fill in the form. Then send it back to us as soon as possible in the envelope provided.

Before

Your enquiry about the use of the entrance area at the library for the purpose of displaying posters and leaflets about Welfare and Supplementary Benefit rights, gives rise to the question of the provenance and authoritativeness of the material to be displayed. Posters and leaflets issued by the Central Office of Information,
the Department of Health and Social Security and other authoritative bodies are usually displayed in libraries, but items of a disputatious or polemic kind, whilst not necessarily excluded, are considered individually.

After

Thank you for your letter asking for permission to put up posters in the library. Before we can give you an answer we will need to see a copy of the posters to make sure they won't offend anyone.

Sometimes you can break them down even further, it depends who your audience is.

Further Resources

Valuing People - http://valuingpeople.gov.uk (Information and examples of accessible information)

Plain English Website - http://www.plainenglish.co.uk (find some words explained)

Easy Info Website - http://easyinfo.org.uk (other ideas of how to make information accessible to people with learning difficulties)