

Make it easy

A guide to preparing Easy to Read information

These guidelines were prepared by the **Accessible Information Working Group**: Rozanne Barrow, Maura Bolger, Frances Casey, Sarah Cronin, Teresa Gadd, Karen Henderson, Aine Ní Aileagáin, Stephanie O'Connor, Deirdre O'Donoghue, Adeline Quinn and Grainne Tinney.

The group would like to sincerely thank Michael Foley, who edited this guide.

The group would also like to thank Linda Ryan for her artwork on the cover of this guide.

Thanks to the following organisations, groups and individuals for their time, advice and support:



Ability West



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

HSE Disability Services



**Beaumont
Hospital
Dublin**

Beaumont Hospital



Inclusion Ireland



St Michaels House



**Brothers of
Charity SE**



Stewarts Care



Prosper Fingal



Cheeverstown

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF VOLUNTARY BODIES

Providing Services to People with Intellectual Disability

**The National Federation of
Voluntary Bodies**

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Foreword	4
Introduction.....	5
Section 1: Principles of making Easy to Read.....	7
Section 2: Using Easy to Read	10
Section 3: Preparing Easy to Read documents	13
Section 4: Writing Easy to Read	15
Section 5: Choosing symbol sets and images	17
Section 6: Choosing symbol sets and images	18
Section 7: Embedding Easy to Read processes.....	25
Section 8: Making communications more accessible.....	29
Closing Remarks	35
Bibliography.....	35
Appendix A.....	39
Appendix B	40

Foreword

In 2005, a group of Speech and Language Therapists who work with adults with intellectual disabilities across Ireland formed a working group on Accessible Information. Our original remit was to produce a symbol pack to support service users in the Personal Outcome Measures (POMs) Process. Following the production of this pack, we recognised that there was a need to look at the area of accessible information at a wider level in the Irish context.

We contacted a number of key agencies across different sectors to discuss and develop guidelines on 'best practice' in producing Easy to Read information specific to Irish audiences. This guide is based on what a review of the research and best practice advises as well as what we have learned from our own experience of preparing Easy to Read documents in an Irish context, primarily for audiences with intellectual disabilities.

The group has wide representation from Inclusion Ireland, the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies and Speech and Language Therapists from hospital settings (representing those with acquired communication difficulties) and intellectual disability service providers. The group initially met in 2008 and reviewed literature and best practice in the area. We then formed subgroups to draw up the sections of this publication.

This publication aims to provide advice and guidance to people new to producing Easy to Read information. We hope that this will promote consistent approaches across agencies in Ireland and raise awareness of the issues involved in the process. You may wish to consult with people using your services about the content of this document before adopting it or adapting it to your needs.

Introduction

Using this guidance

We have written this guidance to help people who are doing the following:

- Writing an Easy to Read document
- Commissioning an outside agency to write Easy to Read documents
- Communicating with people who have low or no literacy in English
- Putting a process in place to communicate using Easy to Read on an ongoing basis

We have gathered together relevant research and guidance and synthesised our own experience to encourage you to create Easy to Read documents.

What is Easy to Read?

Here is a sample page from an Easy to Read document. It is taken from FÁS' equality policy for its customers (FAS, 2009):



Using FÁS Equally

We will ask people to tell us what we need to change so that more people can use FÁS services.

We will ask groups like Inclusion Ireland and the Irish Traveller Movement what we need to change.

We will look at our rules and the way we do things so that everybody is included.

We will look at things like what time we do our training.

We want more disabled people to use FÁS services.

We will make sure everybody can use our buildings and services, including disabled people.

We will give disabled people support when we can.

We will ask disabled people what they need.





Many Easy to Read documents also carry this symbol on the cover:

Easy to Read documents are made up of short, simple sentences that will communicate the most important messages you need to get across. These are usually accompanied by pictures that will aid understanding. The 'document' in question might be a letter, a poster, a form, an instruction booklet or a version of a bigger, more complicated report.

What are the benefits of Easy to Read?

Being able to read is hugely important in Irish society. Reading a newspapers, websites, letters, warning signs, instructions, text messages, flyers and application forms, are all part of how we communicate and engage with each other. Not being able to read can put us at a huge disadvantage. It excludes us from so many areas that others take for granted.

Easy to Read formats can help you to communicate with people who:

- have an intellectual disability
- have a particular learning or communication disability such as dyslexia or aphasia
- do not speak English as their first language, including Deaf people who use Irish Sign Language as their first language
- have basic reading skills

How do people use Easy to Read?

Here are some examples of people who use Easy to Read:

- Marcus has an intellectual disability. He has learned to read some words and needs support reading others. His brother Darren reads the Easy to Read document aloud to Marcus who looks at the pictures. The pictures help Marcus to remember what the document is about. Sometimes a CD comes with the Easy to Read version so that Marcus can listen to it on his own.
- Maya speaks Spanish as her first language. She is still only learning to read English. She uses Easy to Read and understands most of the words. She looks the other words up in the dictionary and writes in the Spanish words over the words she doesn't understand.
- Paula, following an accident, developed aphasia. Her form of aphasia means that she has problems understanding words. She finds that she has to read and reread text to understand it. She's delighted when an Easy to Read version is available as the text is much shorter and easier to understand.
- Shane works in a service for people with intellectual disabilities. He uses Easy to Read documents to help him to work with people who use the service. The simple, straightforward language in the documents also supports him to have a conversation about different topics.

Section 1: Principles of Easy to Read

The potential power of Easy to Read

Communicating goes way beyond just providing information; being able to communicate plays a key role in how we construct our identity. So often we construct what we think and how we feel out of our communications with others.

On a deeper level, identity issues like where we live, what we work at, what interests we pursue are all dependent on how well we communicate and how others communicate with us. Communication (or lack of it) can be fundamental to deciding what happens to us and how much control we have over it. Access to information is often access to a chance to decide what happens to us.

Knowing that Easy to Read information is available gives more people a chance to evaluate advice and, therefore, to make independent decisions. By making these decisions, people have a better chance at living their own lives and creating their own identity.

The right to Easy to Read

Accessibility is a fundamental right; Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that '*States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others... to information and communications*'. In Ireland, the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2005 and the Disability Act 2005 uphold our rights to an accessible society and specifically to accessible information.

The Disability Act (2005) makes specific reference to the accessibility of information for people with intellectual disabilities; the Disability Act states: "The head of a public body shall ensure, as far as practicable, that information published by the body, which contains information relevant to persons with intellectual disabilities, is in clear language that is easily understood by those persons."

Easy to Read as good design

The way in which an organisation communicates with the people who avail of its service should not disadvantage any group of people – including people who have difficulty communicating through spoken and written language.

People who use any kinds of services have a range of communication abilities. The way in which your organisation communicates with people needs to take account of that. Preparing Easy to Read documents brings you into direct contact with your audience through testing. It provides you with a way of proving whether you are producing documents that communicate or not.

Guiding principles for our group on Easy to Read

1. Everyone has a **right to information** and a **right to support** in understanding what they need to know as well as support in making information accessible
2. The **audience is central** to the process from the outset
3. **All methods** of communication are equally respected and valued
4. Information is presented in a way that reflects the person's **ability to process the particular information** at that point in time
5. Consulting with and **involving the target audience** is critical in developing Easy to Read
6. Many people who can benefit from Easy to Read will use a 'communication partner' who can help someone to understand what is being communicated. Sometimes this is a formal process (like a personal assistant or a member of disability support staff in an intellectual disability service) and sometimes it is the person who is available at the time (like the staff member on the other side of a public counter). The **ability of communication partner** to support the process is vital. The communication partner must possess the skills needed to help the information process
7. As communication is a two-way process, there should be a focus on the communication **needs and skills of both the individual and, importantly, the communication partner**
8. Communication is a **mutual interactive process** involving adaptation by both of the communicative partners
9. **Know the abilities of the audience in advance** and find out what they know and what they want to access

"If people explained things properly it would make life so much easier"

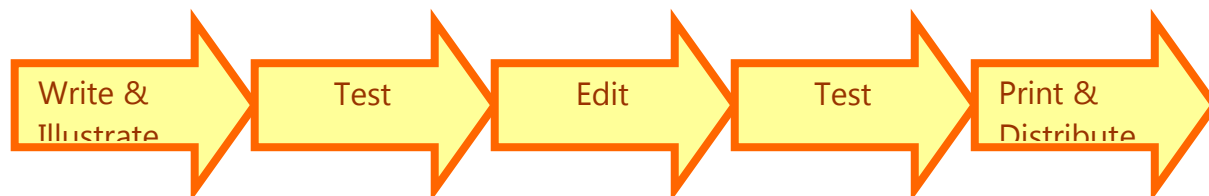
David – service user

"Accessible information for black & minority communities is not just about language translation. Cultural interpretation and the methods used to disseminate the information are as important if not more so than just language translation alone"

Issah Huseini, CEO New Communities

Section 2: Using Easy to Read

How to plan and deliver Easy to Read



So, you have to prepare your first Easy to Read document. The good news is that you don't have to do it alone (in fact, it is good practice not to do it alone). Successful Easy to Read documents are prepared by testing them with the people you are trying to reach. The more that you test, the more you learn about communicating with these audiences and the quicker the process gets.

It goes without saying that you should only prepare Easy to Read when you've got something to communicate and that some or all of your audience would benefit from an Easy to Read document.

Here is an approach for your first document:

1. You decide how you are going to communicate with the audience, e.g. a leaflet, a booklet, a poster campaign, a CD, a video on the internet.
2. You identify what parts of your communication are most relevant to your audience. If this is not clear, you could put together a focus group who are part of your audience. A focus group also gives you a chance to figure out how you will distribute the communication.
3. Write the text and choose suitable images or symbols to accompany your text.
4. Test your publication with a sample of people from your target audience to make sure it is clear and that you are communicating your intended message.
5. Print the publication and distribute it so that the document reaches your audience.

Avoiding the pitfalls and clearing up some issues

Some misconceptions still exist, which can cost your organisation time, money and reputation. Here are some facts that may help:

Is Easy to Read the same as Plain English?

Applying the rules of Plain English to a document makes it easier to read, but it is different to preparing Easy to Read. You can rewrite a document line-by-line in Plain English which is a great help for a general audience, but that is still not helpful to an audience with low or no literacy.

Do I have to get everything from my 500-page report into the Easy to Read document?

What are the really important messages for this audience from your report? Is it the conclusions? Is it the section that deals with intellectual disability services? This is what should appear in the Easy to Read document.

Does every publication need to have an Easy to Read version?

If an audience for a publication does not include people who would benefit from Easy to Read, then there is no need to spend time creating one.

How come we rarely get asked for an Easy to Read version?

Just because you put an Easy to Read symbol on the front of a publication, it does not mean that it will reach your audience. These audiences often have a very low expectation that organisations have bothered to consider their communication needs. Others have spent years hiding their difficulties with text. It is important, therefore, to consider how you will get your target audience to use your publication.

Is Easy to Read like writing for children?

Unless your audience actually are children, do not write as if someone is a child. The terms may be simplified or explained, but you need to respect your audience and use terms that are appropriate to them, e.g. use 'stomach' instead of 'tummy'.

What if people think the Easy to Read document is a legal version of our position?

People should have access to true and accurate information. It is not always possible, however, to include all information in an Easy to Read document. This is then used as an excuse for not creating Easy to Read documents. It is acceptable for the Easy to Read document to carry a disclaimer and to point people to the larger document and a contact person if they need more in-depth information.

Does one size fit all?

Someone originally from another country may not be familiar with certain terms, abbreviations or acronyms that are used here. Yet using terms that they may be more familiar with may cause confusion for someone with an intellectual disability. While no publication will suit every intended reader, it is important to consider your main audience and test your publication with them.

Can we not just pay someone else to do it?

Many organisations may feel that they do not have the skills or staff needed to create Easy to Read documents. If they commission out the work, they still need to be able to judge the quality of what the external agency is doing. If you approach a design agency, a service provider for people with intellectual disabilities, a group dealing with literacy skills or whoever else may be suitable to prepare Easy to Read documents, you still need to brief them thoroughly about what you want to say, who your audience are and what your expectations for the process are.

“People with learning disabilities have been too long in an information ghetto. At one end there is shoddy information ... At the other end there is the high profile glossy information... farmed out to swanky design agencies”

Pete LeGrys (2008)

Section 3: Preparing Easy to Read documents

This section is useful for preparing documents for in-house or briefing designers on what the document should look like. The research is not always consistent on what is recommended so this amalgamation of the available advice should be used as guidance rather than a set of strict rules.

The following topics will be covered in this section:

- Paper used
- Font type
- Font size
- Spacing
- Use of colour

Paper Used

For documents prepared in-house, ordinary photocopying paper should be fine. For printed jobs, we suggest:

- Paper with a matt or uncoated finish
- Thicker paper - weighs over 90gsm
- Avoid thin or glossy paper

Typeface

There is a large range of suggestions for appropriate type and size of font. The following are the most cited type and size of font to be used:

Type of font

- Suggested fonts are Sans Serif font - Arial, Helvetica, Gill Sans Verdana, Tahoma, Avante Garde and Futura
- Arial most commonly cited type of font to be used
- Avoid fonts that look like stylish handwriting, e.g. wedding-invitation-style typefaces
- The numbers 3, 5, and 8 should be clear. Use a font which makes them clear. If you cannot, write them as three, five and eight

Size of font

- Size 14 point most commonly cited, with range of 16-24 point for people with vision impairment. Minimum size is 12 point
- Avoid capital letters, apart from the beginning of sentences / abbreviations / where grammatically correct
- Do not use bold / italics / underlining in the main body of the text. You can use bold to show subheadings and to highlight certain words or sections
- Do not enlarge a document using a photocopier in order to increase text size. It can cause deterioration in print quality and can make a document hard to handle

Spacing


This section refers to the recommended amount of spacing within sentences and to the general body of text.

- Use even spacing between words, keeping it consistent throughout the text
- Avoid splitting words at the end of a sentence, i.e. do not use hyphens
- Lines of text should be between 50-70 characters. People with vision impairments may prefer shorter
- Avoid running sentences over two pages
- Use one-and-a-half spacing between lines
- Use a space between every paragraph
- Leave space between columns. If this is difficult to achieve, use a line to separate them
- Align text to the left, not justified, as it makes it harder to read

Use of colour

The following are suggested font and background colours:

- Use black / dark font on white, cream or yellow background
- Avoid using just pale or pastel colours, clashing colours, and avoid black font on a red or blue background
- Colour can be used to direct people to information. Using high contrast, for example blue or black on a white or light-coloured background or white or yellow text in a blue background. It can also be used to break up information into sections (colour-coding). Keep to a few primary colours that are easily identified. Keep in mind, however, that certain eye conditions can lead to colour blindness, so don't rely on colour alone



"I look at pictures in the Farmers Journal but I couldn't read it. Using pictures I know what things are about"

Vincent

Section 4: Writing Easy to Read

Once the main messages of your publication are decided, you must write them in a way that is clear and unambiguous. This section gives advice on how to use language to achieve that.

Origin of the text

Yours may be an original document, written from scratch or, more likely, there may be an original document for which an Easy to Read version is needed. Other alternative versions, such as Braille or audio versions, can be created with minimal changes to the original text. With an Easy to Read version, you need to write a new version of the text.

It is useful to begin this process with the following questions:

1. Who are your audience? Are they, for example, children, older people with low literacy, people whose first language is not English, young adults?
2. What do that audience really need to know from this publication?
3. What do you want them to do once they have read it?

Answering these three questions will help with how to approach the writing or rewriting of the text. At this stage, it may even become clear that it would be better to run a workshop or to make a video rather than invest money in a print publication.

Preparing adapted text

If you are preparing an Easy to Read version of an existing document, read the publication with the particular audience in mind to figure out what the main messages of interest to them are. Is there anything missing from the original document that needs to go into the Easy to Read, e.g. is there a helpline / advocacy service that will help people to understand this information? Do you need to tell the audience about your organisation and its role?

Create a clear structure that will get your messages across as quickly and clearly as possible, starting with the most important information and ending with contact details of where to get more information.

Think about the length of your document. Many people with low literacy skills can be intimidated by print publication. Text that requires a glance from a proficient reader may require some figuring out for this audience.

Remember your audience

If you are writing Easy to Read for adults or teenagers, don't patronise them. Avoid babyish language or over-explaining something that they will already be aware of. There is also a danger that contentious subjects, such drug use or sexuality, might be censored out of an Easy to Read version. If information is relevant to the audience, it should be in the Easy to Read version.

Writing the text

Your language should be clear and simple. Each word should be easy to understand. Keep your ideas to one per sentence.

- At the typesetting stage, you will need to make sure that the sentence, if it has to be broken up, keeps phrases together. For example, if the sentence is 'Go to the information desk' don't let desk go onto the next line if possible. If it does, also bring 'information' onto that line so that it looks as follows:

Go to the information
desk.

Go to the
Information desk

- Use bullet points as a way of breaking up information where appropriate.
- Express things positively rather than negatively. Rather than say 'the office is not open in the afternoons' say 'the office is open in the mornings only'.
- Avoid technical words, jargon, acronyms and abbreviations.
- Avoid words contracted with apostrophes like 'don't' or 'can't'. Use 'for example' instead of 'e.g.'
- Avoid figures of speech, verbal noise and clichés, e.g. 'at the end of the day', 'basically', 'taking pot luck'.
- Avoid using quantities unless it is necessary. Use phrases like 'a few', 'a lot' instead.
- When using numbers, use numerals rather than words in your text, e.g. 'Each group has 7 people' rather than 'Each group has seven people'.

Some points of grammar

Sentence structure

A simple sentence in English is composed of a 'subject' (the actor or active part of the sentence; the doer) a 'verb' (the thing that is done) and an 'object' (the person or thing that is affected in the sentence). If the sentence is 'Jim opened the door', then 'Jim' is the subject of the sentence, 'opened' is the verb and 'the door' is the object. Alternatively, if it was 'The door hit Jim', the door is now the subject and Jim is the object. You need to keep your sentences in a 'subject-verb-object' order as much as possible, e.g. 'we sell sandwiches' rather than 'sandwiches are what we sell'.

Tell us who did it

Some sentences are called 'passive sentences' because they move the subject to end or remove the subject altogether. 'Sarah fixed the bike' is easier to read and to understand than 'The bike was fixed by Sarah'. Passive sentences cannot be avoided altogether; for example, sometimes the subject is unknown, e.g. 'the bike was stolen'. Try to avoid them where possible.

When verbs become nouns

We turn verbs into nouns all of the time. We call this process 'nominalisation', e.g. 'she was in receipt of' rather than 'she received' or 'they did an evaluation' rather than 'they evaluated'. Try to avoid using nominalisations in text.

'We' are talking to 'you'

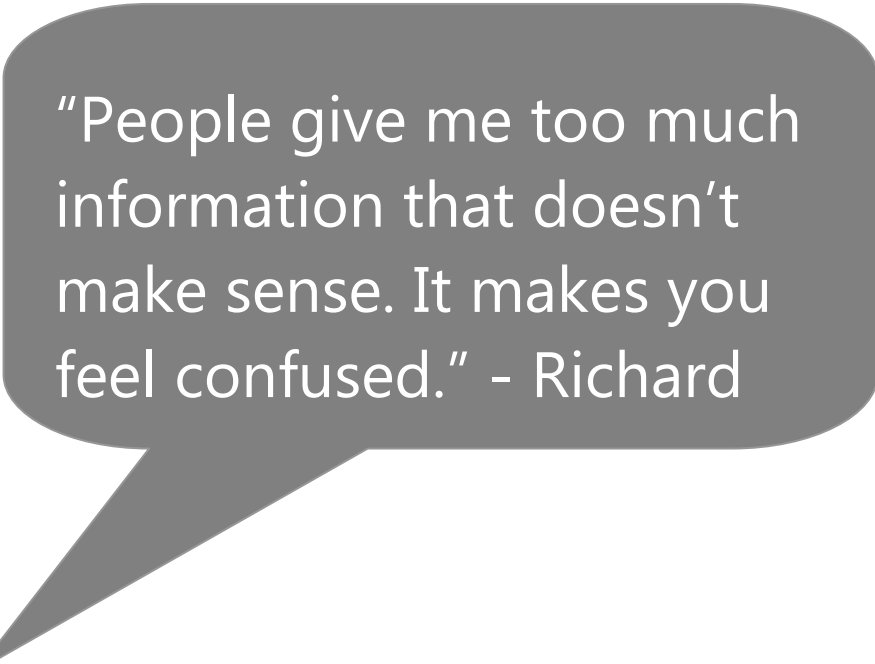
Try to use 'you' and 'we' rather than phrases like 'our clients' or 'stakeholders' or 'the organisation'. If this is being tailor-made for your audience and you are telling them who you are or what you will do, then use 'you' and 'we' or 'I'.

Difficult words

Avoid difficult or unfamiliar words. If you do need to use one, put the difficult or unfamiliar word in bold and explain it. If it is an abstract concept, try to explain it with a clear, practical example. Some people will find a word list or glossary useful.

Giving orders

Cut out any extra words when giving an instruction. Start with the verb and work from there, e.g. 'patrons are advised to please leave their shoes at the door' becomes 'Leave your shoes at the door'.



"People give me too much information that doesn't make sense. It makes you feel confused." - Richard

Section 5: Choosing symbol sets and images

The most obvious characteristic of Easy to Read is the use of images to explain the content of the text. Each of these images has a clear function to express the messages in the text. For many using Easy to Read, they may rely wholly on the images to use a document.

Whether you commission original images or use a pre-existing image library or symbol set, the images will play a major role in the success of your publication. This section examines what choices are available, how to use symbol sets and how to evaluate the images used.

This section does use examples of some symbol sets and systems. This is not an endorsement of these over other symbol sets, system or illustrative methods. A list of different approaches is available in Appendix A. Appendix B gives some details about the nature and pricing structure of six methods.

The purpose of images in Easy to Read

Images can serve a number of purposes in an Easy to Read document. They can visually explain content, they can remind non-readers what is in the text, and they can show locations or people to the reader.

Unlike conventional documents, the images used in Easy to Read can come from a number of sources; you can mix clip-art, web-sourced images, symbols and pictures you have drawn or taken yourself into a single document. You can use any number of different types of images as long as you have permission to use them and as long as they communicate to your audience what you want them to know.

Testing images among your audience will help you understand what works and what doesn't in your document.

Choosing an image

- An image should make the subject clear at a glance to a non-reader.
- The image should be appropriate to the audience. Funny cartoons can be inappropriate to an older audience, charts can be difficult to understand for an audience with intellectual disabilities.
- The same image should be used each time you want to highlight that concept. Unlike conventional publications that try to use a variety of images, Easy to Read documents will repeat an image as often as is necessary. This gives people the chance to learn the meaning of the image. Be careful not to use the same image to mean something different in different parts of the text.
- Always make sure you have permission to use photographs or illustrations. If you are using photographs of people, make sure that they have given their informed consent to be included in the picture. Never assume that, just because an image has been used previously, is available on the internet or is on clip-art, you have permission to use it as you wish. Always check about the rights to an image.

The information that pictures and symbols carry

- Use images that carry meaning for the audience and, where appropriate, personalise images, e.g. use a picture of your audience's local bus.
- Some readers will not understand conceptual images, either because they have no meaning in their culture or because they do not understand the convention. One example of this is the use of a light bulb to represent an idea; for some people this image simply means an electric light bulb.
- Avoid the use of maps for audiences with intellectual disabilities; use photographs of places that people will recognise instead. Explain how to find a place in words as well as using a picture.
- Be aware that photographs can hold a lot of information and need to be carefully taken to make sure they show one idea clearly or do not have too many things in them to look at. Avoid images that are 'busy', cluttered, include irrelevant or too much extra detail that does not relate to the meaning of the image.
- Consider that people may not be able to distinguish background from foreground in images and may be distracted by things in the background which are not of relevance.
- Highlight the key part of images with colour, by making it bigger or drawing a circle around it.
- Bear in mind that pictures alone can be limited at showing complicated actions or explaining complicated ideas. There is a limit as to how much detail you can put into each picture before it becomes too hard to understand. The message will need to be simplified.

Location and quality of images

- Ensure that the images are of high quality, e.g. that photographs are in focus or illustrations are not pixelated
- Make sure images are of a reasonable size so that they are easy to see and to recognise
- Photocopy the intended images once or twice in half-tone to test if they remain clear
- Place image next to the text, usually to the left-hand side in a margin of around 8cm
- Do not place images above text or text around images
- Never use a picture as a background to the text.

Some terminology

As you prepare Easy to Read documents or commission out the work, you will become familiar with the idea of symbols which are commonly used in communication with people with certain disabilities. While these guidelines do not recommend one symbol set or system over another, this is an introduction to what they are about and how you can evaluate one over another. More details on some of the main sets / systems are in the Appendices.

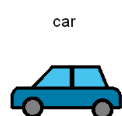
Pictures and symbols

A picture, be it a photograph or an illustration, is different from a symbol in that a picture hold a lot of information; it is open to different interpretations. A symbol is supposed to convey a single concept, with any unclear information removed. In general, Easy to Read documents tend to use symbols rather than pictures.

Symbol sets and symbol systems

Symbol sets are a fixed group of symbols that all look as if they belong to the one set. Symbol systems, on the other hand, have a defined structure and a set of rules, which means that the vocabulary of the system can be expanded.

Types of symbol



Pictorial symbols that are easily recognisable
(Transparent or guessable symbols)



Representational images that may need explanation
(Translucent or learnable symbols)



Pictorial images that represent an abstract concept
(Opaque or symbols that need to be learned)



it



Abstract symbols
(These need to be taught and learned)

Representing a concept

An image showing a concrete action or object can be represented in many different ways. Here are examples of both a concrete concept (a shop) and abstract concepts (rights) represented by different approaches.

Here are different representations of the concept 'Shop' along with the source of each symbol:



Boardmaker



Photosymbols

shopping trolley



Pics for PECS



Google Images

And here are different representations of the concept 'Rights'



Boardmaker



Photosymbols

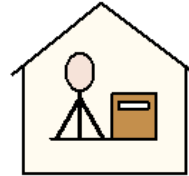
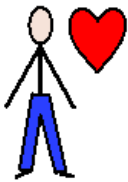
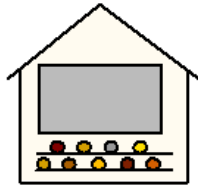
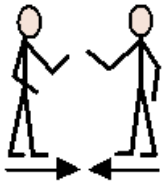


Widgit



Google Images

Take a look at the pictures and symbols below; what do they represent? This shows how ambiguous sets and systems can be for someone with no literacy and no experience of a particular set or system. Answers are on the next page.



The answers to those questions are, row by row: meet, write, holiday, happy, beside, pray, happy, cinema, peaceful, boyfriend, choose, shop.

Choosing a symbol set or symbol system

Choosing a symbol set or system or commissioning your own symbols can be made easier by understanding your audience. The smaller the audience or the more homogenous they are, the more likely it is that you will be able to use one set or system and stick to it for every publication. If, however, you are trying to pick one system that will suit, e.g. everyone who does not speak English as their first language, regardless of factors like age, gender, cultural background, one set or system may not be as effective.

Issues to keep in mind when choosing a symbol set or system:

- Number of symbols in the set
- Completeness of the symbol set, such as what topics are covered
- Iconicity – how similar the symbol is to its meaning
- Availability – how easy the symbols are to find and to legally use
- Cost of using a symbol set or system
- Ease of use of the accompanying software
- Consistency of images
- Features of the images, e.g. reproduction quality, colour
- Flexibility of a set or system and potential to adapt and customise it
- Suitable for various users e.g. age groups, client groups
- Appropriateness – can users identify with them culturally, are they age-appropriate?
- Origins – some symbols sets and systems were gathered or devised for particular purposes e.g. face to face communication, supporting literacy, supporting memory, advocacy & rights.

If a suitable symbol set or system cannot be found, commissioning photography or illustration is another course of action. Commissioning symbols means that your organisation can customise what is portrayed and have more control over it. The symbols can show your organisation's public counters, products and service areas. It also means that the overall look of the images is unified. These commissioned images usually belong to the organisation to use again and again. Most design agencies will offer to create images or illustrations for you.

The drawback of commissioning images is that the agency creating the images needs to be very well briefed on what is needed. In essence, they are creating a symbol set for your organisation which may then need to be modified, once it is tested. They must also understand the nature of symbol sets so that they are creating functional images rather than something that fits their style of work.

There is also a danger when creating a new symbol set, that it will cause confusion among service users who are accustomed to other symbol sets.

Bear in mind that, for some audiences, using a mix of clip art, photographs and other symbols is the norm. While this is unusual in other types of publications, it is not in Easy to Read.

"My sister read it. I had an idea what it was then."

Claire

Section 7: Embedding Easy to Read processes

Section 2 looked at the straightforward process of creating a one-off piece of Easy to Read communication. This section will look at how you can embed Easy to Read communication into your organisational processes, saving time and effort while improving your communications in the long run.

Your communications policy

Many organisations have a communications policy in place which helps them to communicate effectively. It usually covers communication with those in the organisation like employees and volunteers, as well as external people like funders or customers. If people with low literacy are part of your policy's audience, is the policy considering them or catering to them? For example, can all of your staff understand your safety statement?

A comprehensive communications policy may include:

- Signposts and wayfinding, such as entrance, exits, lifts, bathrooms
- Corporate documents such as annual reports, service plans, policy documents, access to services
- Customer documents such as leaflets, forms, brochures.

You can embed accessibility into your organisation's communications policy by adopting it as an overarching principle. This would also include a commitment to:

- Consider national guidelines when developing accessible information (such as the Citizens Information Board's guidelines (CIB, 2009)
- Provide appropriate training in how to develop accessible information for both staff and people who use services
- Provide access to and opportunities to use accessible technology to those who could benefit from it.

Once you have made the commitment to provide accessible information, there may be times where difficulties emerge:

- If you are providing a one-off leaflet for a particular audience you are not familiar with
- If you are part of an organisation that does not have the resources to provide accessible information

In these instances, it can help to find an organisation that has resources and skills to produce accessible information for that audience. You could either partner with these organisations to produce, test and distribute the information, or you may subcontract it to them if staff resources or time is an issue.

While our focus is on Easy to Read in this guidance, you may also find yourself using a number of approaches to get your message out, including:

- Large print
- Audio, including CD, mp3
- DVD
- Braille
- Irish Sign Language (ISL)
- LAMH
- Accessible websites
- Assistive technologies

We will look at these approaches in Section 7. An important point, however, is that the earlier you involve your audience in developing accessible information the better. If you involve your audience at the start of the process, the information you produce will be of a much higher quality and will prove more valuable for your audience.

Developing an Accessible Information Group

If your organisation communicates regularly using Easy to Read, you probably already have an accessible information person or group. On the other hand, if your organisation has never created Easy to Read documents before, you may see this as a one-off. It may be 'just one more complication' in a project where the publication or public communication is just one part. If, however, you are required (either because of the legislation or because of organisational policy) to communicate using Easy to Read now, the chances are that you will have to do it again. That is why we suggest that you set up an Accessible Information Group.

As stated previously, it is important to include representatives of your audience on the team. That audience may be people with disabilities, their family or advocates. Including them on the group means more than simply inviting them along. As is good practice in other groups, ensure that everyone can participate meaningfully.

Other group members may include the people responsible for:

- Producing the original information. This person is responsible for highlighting the main points which should be included in the accessible version
- managing the overall project; buy-in is important so that this is not simply an add-on
- the design, IT or admin skills required to produce the publication – who has knowledge / expertise in developing accessible media
- Creating Easy to Read documents or communicating with these audiences.

How your organisation can develop structures for accessible information

1. As part of your overall communications project, bring together the Accessible Information Group at an early stage
2. Examine information that is being made accessible
3. Agree what accessible formats to produce (e.g. DVD, CD, Easy to Read document)
4. Summarise the key points of information for the audience
5. Rewrite and organise these key points in an Easy to Read style
6. Test the Easy to Read and the distribution strategy with a sample of the target audience
7. Draw up a full draft of the Easy to Read using points from testing
8. Consult again with the people involved in the original testing (see Step 6). Give feedback on the first testing and test the full draft. There may also be a chance to get views on how the consultation worked and how it could be improved.
9. Finalise the Easy to Read document based on above consultation. Get agreement from the Accessible Information Group for the final document.
10. Publish the information. Make reference to the involvement of the consultation group in the development of the accessible information.
11. Make sure that each person involved in the testing receives a copy of the final information that is produced as soon as it is published. It is important that each person see the final result of their involvement in the project to ensure that future partnerships can emerge from the process.

Other issues for consideration

Using focus groups

Focus groups have proved a useful format in research with people with intellectual disabilities and communication impairments. Apart from the convenience of interviewing a number of people at once, interaction can draw out useful information. Also, participants tend to feel empowered and supported by sharing in a group with people who they perceive as their peers and may share opinions more openly.

All focus groups, of course, if not run effectively, can be dominated by certain individuals. In the case of people with communication difficulties, if they are being supported to contribute (which will be necessary for some participants), the views of the supporter or even of the facilitator can 'contaminate' the results. Also, a focus group on Easy to Read is usually trying to find out if terms and concepts are understandable. It can be difficult for anyone to admit that they do not understand something in front of a group without feeling foolish or vulnerable. This can lead to people pretending they understand when they do not.

Experience in running focus groups with the proposed audience and an awareness of pitfalls is vital. For further information on working with people with ID in focus groups, see Doyle (2009).

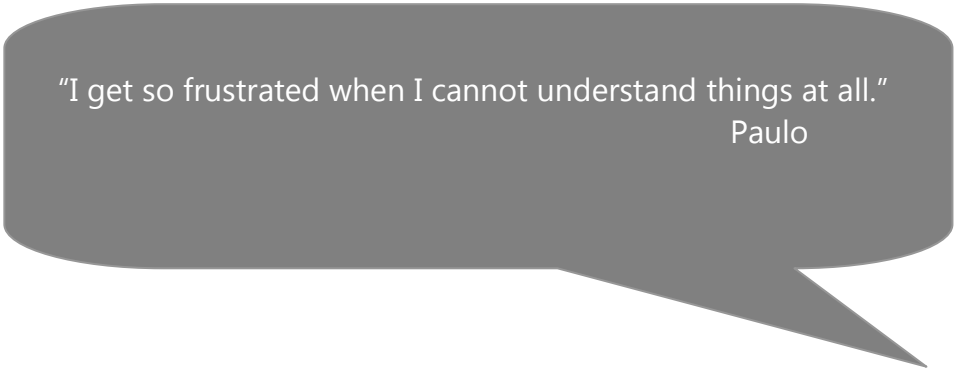
Ethics while testing

In order to ensure that people who avail of services are actively engaged in the development of the accessible media, the following points are important:

- Informed consent must be sought from each person who is consulted. This means that the person must be able to understand what they are being asked about, and that they have a choice whether or not to participate
- Meetings should be held in an accessible venue and at a time that is appropriate (e.g. make sure people have access to transport and time to travel to the meeting)
- Information for the meeting should be accessible for each person involved
- Each person should be clear about what is expected of them and their time commitment to the project. They should also be told of what will happen during the rest of the process and be sent a copy of the final product
- It is important that a wide range of people within the target audience are consulted. It is important to include people who may have a difficulty communicating and appropriate support should be provided. Equality and diversity issues should also be considered and acknowledged
- Each person's opinion should be valued and respected

Budget considerations

- IT (PCs and Software, other assistive technology)
- Materials (colour ink, cartridges & paper)
- Time
- Transport (if required)
- Meeting rooms (room, tea/coffee, lunch, etc.)
- External expertise if required
- Protected time or personnel allocated
- Training requirements in accessible media, e.g. digital photography, easy-to-read documents, making a CD or DVD etc.



"I get so frustrated when I cannot understand things at all."

Paulo

Section 7: Making communications more accessible

Not everyone accesses information in the same way. Creating alternative formats helps to deliver information in an accessible way. This section looks at other formats briefly to give a sense of how Easy to Read fits in with accessible communications. It is important to note that these formats work alongside other communication supports such as Irish Sign Language (ISL) and LAMH. More in-depth information on formats is available from the Citizens Information Board publication 'Information for All'.

In this section, we look briefly at some formats that are traditionally considered to be 'accessible formats' as well as formats that can be made more accessible.

Accessible formats

Audio

Audio versions of your document can be useful for people with vision impairments, people with literacy difficulties and people with intellectual disabilities. Audio formats can be made available on tape, CD or as an MP3 download.

Audio versions can be useful to be played to a group which may then lead to a discussion. Be aware, however, that listening to written text being read is often much less compelling than listening to the radio. Audio should not be seen as a replacement for Easy to Read, as for many audiences, the difficulty is not just literacy but understanding.

Considerations when creating audio formats

- When making an audio version, remember that it is hard for most people to retain too much auditory information
- You should aim for clear, good-quality audio. NCBI has a recording studio specifically for this purpose
- Recording audio takes time, as readers and studio space need to be booked in advance
- If the audio version is going to be important to your overall distribution campaign, you may consider rewriting parts of the text to better suit audio. This can cause confusion if your audio is then different from your written text so it is best to consider this issue when preparing your original written text
- Low-pitched voices are used most as higher pitches can be difficult to hear for those who are hard of hearing.

Braille

Braille can be used to provide information to people with vision impairments if they have learned how to read Braille

Braille is divided into two grades: Grade 1 is used for single words, learning Braille and for short text; Grade 2 is used for longer descriptions and sentences.

Considerations when creating Braille formats

- Bulleted points, italics, bolding, underlining are converted into specialised configurations recognisable to Braille readers
- Visual material in your document is difficult to convert into Braille. When using visuals, clearly describe in text the meaning of the visual material
- There are a limited number of locations in Ireland that produce Braille. It also requires time to prepare

Large Print

Large print is the most popular accessible format. While many organisations now use Clear Print guidelines to make their main documents more legible and readable, large print is still useful for many people with vision impairments.

Considerations when creating Large Print formats

- Different Large Print font sizes will suit different people. Where appropriate, make the Large Print version on demand so that the size of the text suits the reader
- Avoid using a photocopier to enlarge your original document. Giving people large A3-size sheets can make a document difficult to handle and use
- Be aware that changing the print size in a document can lead to problems with formatting and page references

Video

Video format can be useful for people with literacy difficulties and people with intellectual disabilities. The increased use of camcorders and YouTube-style online video channels means that video can be recorded and distributed economically. By its nature, however, video does require planning. The expectations and needs of the audience must be part of that planning process.

Considerations when creating video formats

- Videos must have a clear and logical script
- Text and pictures should not change quickly
- Close up shots are preferable over long or wide shots. Avoid background activity that does not relate to the meaning of the message being conveyed;
- To make your video accessible to people with vision impairments, audio description should be used. For full guidelines on narrating a video, refer to Inspired services (<http://www.inspireservices.org.uk/>).
- Sound quality must be of a high standard. Avoid using music and sound effects at the same time as the narration;
- The use of text on screen should be used for opening titles, for identifying speakers, to provide information about facts;
- Avoid the use of graphs, charts and drawings. If they are necessary, ensure that narration can explain them clearly;
- Videos may need to have signing from either ISL or LAMH;
- Be sure to get the consent of everyone appearing in the video, even in the background. To reasonably be able to give consent, people need to understand what the video will be used for and who will see it.

Other formats

Electronic formats

Use of electronic communication in everyday life is increasing and is becoming a popular method of accessing information. There are many hardware devices and software programs that make computers easier to use. These include:

- Programs that enlarge or alter the colour text on the screen for people with visual impairments
- Programs that describe information on the screen in Braille or synthesized speech for people who are blind or have difficulty reading
- Hardware and software that modifies the behaviour of the mouse and keyboard
- Programs that enable the user to type using a mouse or his or her voice
- Word or phrase prediction software, which allows users to type more quickly and with fewer keystrokes
- Alternate input devices, such as switches, for people who cannot use a mouse or a keyboard

Although not everyone can or has access to information electronically, it is possible to build accessibility into the design of a website or document.

Websites

Websites should be attractive, easy to navigate, quick to download and should contain the information that people need. The following information outlines areas to be considered. For more detailed information, the W3C have produced the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Adaptations for people with vision impairment

- A good website will allow a person with vision impairment to customise web pages to their own needs
- site should allow people to change the size of the text/colour/contrast; site should allow for use of text-to-speech software e.g. JAWS, Windows Eyes

Adaptations for people with hearing impairment

Although websites are visual, consider the needs of people with a hearing impairment:

- use simple, clear language – some people with a hearing impairment may have a limited reading vocabulary, as English is not their first language; Irish Sign Language is and it is different in form and structure to English
- if you are using audio or video, provide text-based transcripts and closed captioning. Closed captioning consists of a link to the 'script' of the video. This link should be located close to the video clip

Adaptations for people with mobility impairment:

People with certain mobility impairments may have difficulties with hand movement and hand-eye co-ordination. They may use adapted devices like a joystick instead of a mouse, a large button keyboard or an optical wand. The following can improve their access:

- use large buttons rather than text for navigation as this provides a larger target for links
- use clear and consistent layouts and navigation

Adaptations for people with an intellectual disability

Many people with an intellectual disability may be excluded from websites by difficult navigation and complex language.

- use simple, uniform layouts with the option of only viewing one thing at a time
- use plain language
- avoid pages overloaded with too many distractions or too many choices
- avoid long lists of links unless they are arranged in logical groups of no more than 5 or 6 links each
- using a combination of auditory information, pictures and text helps to reinforce navigation and actions
- auditory information should be clear, simple and repeatable

- include a plain language description of the site
- include a simple way to return to the home page
- avoid animated graphics
- simplify sequences – limit the choice and number of steps

Accessible e-mail

There are 3 different e-mail formats that can be used within e-mail: plain text (most basic), rich text and HTML (most complex). Which you use depends on the level of formatting you require e.g. bullet points, images, etc. Different systems display e-mails in different ways, which means that e-mails may change in presentation if the sender and recipient are using different systems. It is generally recommended that you use plain text as this will ensure your e-mail arrives unchanged, however there are a number of things that can be done to increase the likelihood that other formats are supported, such as creating accessible HTML in your emails.

Electronic documents

As electronic documents are circulated widely and can change format frequently, e.g. printed on paper, downloaded onto a mobile device or loaded onto a website, it is important that it is well-formatted and structured initially. Consider the following general guidelines, with more detailed advice available online.

Microsoft Word documents

- Give alternative labels for all images
- Avoid animated text
- Create tables using the 'table tools' rather than using tabs
- When linking web pages from the document, use descriptive links
- Use heading styles to create structure and style formatting to create space around paragraphs rather than carriage returns
- Provide a text transcript of the content of embedded sound files

Accessible PDF files

- Your original document should be accessible. Use Word 2000 or later and convert to PDF using the latest version of Adobe Acrobat
- After the PDF document has been created, run the built-in accessibility checker in Adobe Acrobat

Accessible PowerPoint


- Creating accessible versions of PowerPoint presentations is easier if they only contain headings, text, bullet points and simple graphics
- Include notes describing graphics, diagrams and other non-text elements
- For PowerPoint presentations, suggested font size is 36 for headings and 28 for text
- Use only 5 bullet points per PowerPoint slide
- For PowerPoint presentations use white text on a blue background. Use a solid-coloured background, rather than a patterned one

CD ROMs

- Ensure the CD writing software is set-up to facilitate all CD readers
- Record the CD at the lowest speed (x4) so that older computers can read it

Telephone

- Offer an alternative to the telephone – fax / website / e-mail / textphone / typetalk / SMS text
- Textphones enable people with a hearing impairment to communicate via a keyboard and small visual display connected to the phone line. Many people will now use their mobile phone to text as the first way to communicate
- Typetalk is a service that enables textphone users to communicate using a regular phone line, via an operator



"When we don't work to make information accessible, we have control over what people can know or find out. We should not have that control over people."

Frieda Bent KARE/ CPN Vice-chairperson

Closing Remarks

“Having good information helps you to be independent, to do my own thing and make my own choices.”

Sharon

We wrote this guide to help you to begin the process of communicating through Easy to Read. We hope the guide will take you beyond complying with the legislation and towards embedding Easy to Read as a way in which your communications can reach as wide an audience as possible.

References:

1. Citizens Information Board (2009) *Accessible information for all*. Dublin: Citizens Information Board.
2. Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2004). *Disability Bill 2005*. Dublin: Stationary Office
3. Doyle, John (2009) *Using Focus Groups as a Research Method in Intellectual Disability Research: A Practical Guide*. Galway: National Federation of Voluntary Bodies.
4. FAS (2009) *FAS Equality Policy for its Customers – easy to read version*. Available on <http://www.fas.ie/NR/rdonlyres/027A08C9-66C0-4DBB-B3B9-BCBEA4ABB852/787/FAEqualityPolicyforitsCustomersEasytoReadVersion.pdf>
5. *Equal Status Act, 2000* [Ireland], 25 October 2000, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b5dc0.html> [accessed 26 April 2011].
6. United Nations (2005). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml.

Bibliography:

1. Aldridge, J. (2007). Picture this: the use of participatory photographic research methods with people with learning disabilities. *Disability and Society*, **22**, 1-17.
2. Bell, D. and Cameron, L. (2007) From Dare I say...? to I dare say: a case example illustrating the extension of the use of Talking Mats to people with learning disabilities who are able to speak but unwilling to do so. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities: British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, **36**: 122-127.
3. Beukelman, D. & Mirenda, P. (1998). *Augmentative and alternative communication: management of severe communication disorders in children and adults*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
4. Bradshaw, J. (2000). Commentary: a total communication approach towards meeting the communication needs of people with learning disabilities. *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, **5 (1)**, 27-30.
5. Byrne, J. and Bolander, E. (2006) *Making e-communication accessible: best practice for websites, email and electronic documents*. Glasgow: Scottish Consumer Council.
6. Detheridge, T. and Detheridge, M. (2002). *Literacy through symbols*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
7. Disability Rights Commission, UK (2003) *Good signs – Improving signs for people with a learning disability. A report to the Disability Rights Commission*. Retrieved April 2, 2008 from http://www.mencap.org.uk/download/good_signs.pdf
8. Dunn, A. and Stenfert Kroese, B. (2006) 'Are you allowed to say that?' using video materials to provide accessible information about psychology services. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, **34**, 215-219.
9. Eames, S., McKenna, K., Worrall, L. and Read, S. (2003). The Suitability of Written Education Materials for Stroke Survivors and Their Carers. *Topics in Stroke Rehabilitation*, **10 (3)**, 70-83.
10. FAS (2009) Easy to Read Equality Policy for its customers. Available on: <http://www.fas.ie/NR/rdonlyres/027A08C9-66C0-4DBB-B3B9-BCBEA4ABB852/787/FAEqualityPolicyforitsCustomersEasytoReadVersion.pdf>. Last Accessed 3/8/2011.
11. Freyhoff, G. et al (1998) *Make it simple: European guidelines for the production of easy-to-read information for people with learning disability for authors, editors, information providers, translators and other interested persons*. Brussels: ILSMH European Association.
12. Grant, K. et al (2009) Accessible information – what to create, and how to do it. *Access by Design*, **120**, 17-20.
13. Hasler, F. (1993) The place of information provision in the disability movement. In *The National Disability Information Project's Information Enables: Improving access to information services for disabled people*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
14. Hogdon, L. (1995) *Visual Strategies for improving communication*: Michigan: Quirk Roberts.
15. Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (2007) *Making your information accessible: guidelines for transport providers*. Belfast: IMTAC.
16. Inspired Services, *Guide to making information easier*. Retrieved [Date] from <http://www.inspireservices.org.uk>
17. Johnson, K. (2009) No Longer Researching About Us Without Us: a researcher's reflection on rights and inclusive research in Ireland. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, **37 (4)**, 250-256.
18. Jones, J. (2000) A total communication approach towards meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities. *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, **5 (1)**, 20-26.
19. Laverty, D. (2006) Where to begin with visual strategies. In Wilson, A. (eds) *Practical solutions to support communication*. Edinburgh: Call Centre.
20. Law, J., Bunning, K., Byng, S., Farrelly, S. and Heyman, B. (2005) Making sense in primary care: Levelling the playing field for people with communication difficulties. *Disability and Society*, **20 (2)**, 169-184.
21. Le Grys, P. (2004) A way out of the information ghetto. *Learning Disability Practice*, **7(8)**;

22. Llewellyn, P. (2009) Supporting people with intellectual disabilities to take part in focus groups: reflections on a research project. *Disability & Society*, **24 (7)**: 845-856.
23. Mencap (2000) *Am I making myself clear?* London: Mencap.
24. Millar, S. (2003) Pictures and Symbols: Planning, Consulting and Documenting. In Wilson A. (ed) *Communicating with pictures and symbols*. Edinburgh: Call Centre.
25. National Adult Literacy Agency (2009), *Writing and Design Tips*. 2nd ed. Dublin: NALA.
26. National Disability Authority (2005) *First steps in producing accessible publications*. Dublin: NDA.
27. National Disability Authority (2006) *Code of practice on accessibility of public services and information provided by public bodies*. Dublin: NDA.
28. Owens, J. S. (2006) Accessible Information for People with Complex Communication Needs. *Alternative and Augmentative Communication*, **22 (3)**, 196-208.
29. Parr, S., Elman, R. J., and Moss, B. (2003) The internet and aphasia: crossing the digital divide. In Parr, S., Duchan, J. and Pound, C. (2003) *Aphasia inside out: reflections on communication disability*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
30. Pereira, L.M., Saragoca, E., Loura, L.C. and Espadinha, C. (2003) An e-mail programme for mentally impaired persons. *Technology and Disability*, **15**, 217-222.
31. Poncelas, A. and Murphy, G. (2007) Accessible Information for People with Intellectual Disabilities: Do symbols really help? *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, **20**, 466-474.
32. Pound, C., Duchan, J., Penman, T., Hewitt, A. and Parr, S. (2007) Communication access to organisations: Inclusionary practices for people with aphasia. *Aphasiology*, **21 (1)**, 23-38.
33. Reuben, S. and West, R. (2005) *How to use pictures to make your information accessible*. CHANGE, Retrieved April 5, 2008 from <http://www.easyinfo.org.uk>
34. Rodgers, J. and Namaganda, S. (2005) Making information easier for people with learning disabilities. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, **33**, 52-58.
35. Rodgers, J., Townsley, R., Tarleton, B., Folkes, L., Mears, C. et al. (2004) *Information for all: guidance*. Retrieved 20 October, 2004 from <http://www.easyinfo.org.uk>
36. Rodgers, J., Townsley, R., Tarleton, B., Folkes, L., Mears, C. et al. (2004) *Information for all: guidance*. Retrieved 20 October, 2004 from <http://www.easyinfo.org.uk>
37. Rose, T., Worrall, L. and McKenna, K. (2003) .The effectiveness of aphasia-friendly principles for printed health education materials for people with aphasia following stroke. *Aphasiology*, **17 (10)**, 947-963.
38. Royal National Institute of Blind People (2006), *See it right: making information accessible for people with sight problems*. London: RNIB.
39. Scottish Accessible Information Forum (2004) *Barrier Free Information – How to develop your local accessible information strategy. A practical guide for local authorities and others*. Glasgow: SAIF.
40. Strydom, A., Forster, M., Wilkie, B. M., Edwards, C. and Hall, I. S. (2001) Patient information leaflets for people with learning disabilities who take psychiatric medication. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, **29**, 72-76.
41. Tarleton, B. and Wye Forest self advocacy project (2005) Writing it ourselves. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, **33**, 65-69.
42. Thurman, S. (2005) Without words – meaningful information for people with high individual communication needs. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, **33**, 83-89.
43. Ware, J. (2004) Ascertaining the views of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, **32**, 175-179.
44. WC3 (2009) Guidelines for web content accessibility Retrieved Oct, 2009, from <http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/checkpoint-list.html>

Websites accessed:

45. <http://www.informationalternatives.co.uk/clearprint.htm>
46. http://www.drdni.gov.uk/drd_guide_to_making_information_accessible-september_2008-2.pdf
47. <http://easy.info.org.uk/dynamic/esayinfo46.jsp>
48. <http://www.imtac.org.uk/publications/information%20good%20practice%20outline%20updated%20may%2007.pdf>

Appendix A

Here is a list of different image / symbol sources that are used in the preparation of Easy to Read:

- PCS (Boardmaker)
- Dynasyms
- Bonnington symbol system
- Change
- People First
- DisabledGo symbols
- Clipart
- Photosymbols 3
- Makaton symbols
- Blissymbolics
- Overboard
- Picture master board designer
- Minspeak
- Compic
- Widgit
- Colour photos
- Colour pictures
- Images from the net
- Cartoons
- Service and product logos
- Handrawn pictures
- ISpeak picture communication
- Pics for PECS
- Unlimiter 9 formats symbol system
- Valuing people clipart collection (Inspired Services)
- Image symbol set
- Bild
- Norah Fry
- iStockphoto
- FreeStockPhoto

Appendix B

Details of seven symbol methods are covered:

1. Picture Communication Symbols
2. Photosymbols 3
3. Pics for PECS 2003
4. Images from the internet
5. Bonnington Symbol System
6. The Valuing People ClipArt Collection
7. Change Picture Bank

The listing of these symbol sets are not in any particular order. The Group does not endorse or recommend the use of any one system. Please note, also, that the details were correct at time of preparation, but may have changed since then.

1. Picture Communication Symbols available via Boardmaker software (www.mayer-johnson.com)

Format	CD for Windows or Mac
Version	Single-user and network versions available of a family of products of which Boardmaker v.6 is the basic package.
Cost	Single user CD of Boardmaker v.6 costs ST£209, or ST£269 with 2000-2008 addendum libraries. These give access to additional symbols.
Trial	30-day trial downloads available of different products.
Supplier	DynaVox Mayer-Johnson. Also available from www.widgit.com in UK and other suppliers in Ireland and internationally
Creator	Mayer-Johnson in US, but adapted for UK and other countries, i.e. has country specific symbols
Origin	Augmentative and alternative communication
How to use	Type in word in symbol finder window within programme and various symbol options come up for selection to use. It is possible to copy images for use in other applications.
Flexibility	Can create 'custom' symbols, for example can change parts of symbols and their colour and can combine symbols. Can have text or without.
Symbol features	Can choose colour or black and white symbols that represent words, phrases and concepts.
No. of symbols	4,500 symbols (with 44 different languages) in basic version. Symbol additions available e.g. 2000-2008 addendum libraries, Widgit literacy symbols for Boardmaker (7000 symbols) ST£69,

Bliss in Boardmaker library format, PCS animated metafiles to assist with learning actions and concepts.

Range of symbols

Good range of symbol categories

Training

Online support database available to assist with trouble shooting.
Free face to face training available on application.

Copyright

Copyright policy available online. It refers to different categories of uses.

Other

Add on resources, e.g. Boardmaker Plus for interactivity, Boardmaker with Speaking Dynamically Pro enabling use of computer as a talking word processor and speech output device.

2. Photosymbols 3 (www.photosymbols.co.uk)

Format

Memory stick/pocket USB flashdrive which runs on Windows or Apple Mac within web browser.

Version

Single user and site licences for 100 and 1000.

Cost

Single user licence costs ST£400 + VAT or ST£470 incl. VAT. Mini-site (10 user) licence costs ST£2000 plus VAT or ST£2350 incl. VAT. Site (100-user) licence costs ST£4,000 plus VAT or ST£4,700 incl. VAT. Global (1000-user) licence costs ST£8,000 + VAT or ST£9,400 incl. VAT. Speaking up pack available to self advocacy groups run by people with intellectual disability/disabled people or small charities costs ST£200 plus VAT or ST£235 incl. VAT.

Trial

Sample photosymbols available to view on website. Can download example documents showing information made with photosymbols.

Supplier

Photosymbols Ltd.

Creator

Co-founded by Pete Le Grys and Karl Seymour

Origin

Started in Bristol in 2003 to provide high quality pictures for easy read information

How to use

Browser allows you search for pictures. Type in word and pick from choices that come up.

Flexibility

Does not allow creation of custom symbols. Can use high or low resolution pictures.

Symbol features

Mixture of photos and drawings. Version 3 has children as well as adults. Most are acted by models with intellectual disability 'with strong emphasis on equality and diversity'. Lots of overlap between photos. Many could be illustrating several ideas.

No. of symbols

3000 symbols.

Range of symbols

Fair range of symbols.

Training

Tips for making easy read on website and they offer easy read 1-day, 3-day or 5-day training courses and long term ongoing training

Copyright

Other

3. Pics for PECS 2003 (www.pecs.org.uk)

Format	CD
Version	Pics for PECS 2010
Cost	ST£33.49 + VAT of ST£5.86
Trial	Full written list of symbols available on website
Supplier	Pyramid Educational Consultants
Creator	Brad Almond of Pyramid Group Management
Origin	The CD is a collection of pictures most commonly used by children who communicate using a Picture Exchange Communication System
How to use	Symbols are available in categories in alphabetical order
Flexibility	Cannot change content of images
Symbol features	Full-colour drawings
No. of symbols	Over 2200 symbols
Range of symbols	Pics for PECS 2010 Categories are: Alphabet and Numerals, Activities and Events, Animals, Attributes, Body Parts, Clothing, Emotions and Feelings, Food & Drinks, Holidays, Home, Hygiene & Personal Care, Musical Instruments, Outdoors & Nature, People & Nature, People and Characters, Places, School, Sentence Starters Phrases & Questions, Songs & Stories, Sports & Equipment, Tools, Toys and Leisure Items, Vehicles, Verbs and Other.
Training	None known
Copyright	'All images in this software are owned by Pyramid Educational Consultants who retains all rights not expressly granted. Selling or redistribution of any of the images for any commercial purposes is prohibited. Use of the images in electronic format, including on-line use and multimedia applications is prohibited.'

Other

4. Images from the Internet (www.morguefile.com)

The use of images from the internet may be free to use. However users must check the copyright / licencing position from the website first. Some websites allow their images to be used for 'educational purposes', others provide access once the image source is credited, others require payment for use. The above website provides free images for corporate or public use.

Format	Search free photo archive section of website for free high resolution digital photographs that have been contributed by photographers.
Version	Not applicable. New photographs being added continuously.
Cost	None for free photo archive section of the website

Trial	Can search free photo archive section of website for required images
Supplier	Morguefile.com
Creator	Michael Connors, Kevin Connors, Johann Seemann
Origin	The purpose of the site is to provide free image reference material for illustrators, comic book artists, designers, teachers and all creative pursuits.
How to use	Type in name of image you require into search box. A range of photographs will appear to view and download.
Flexibility	One can filter images sought in various ways, for example by keyword, category, size.
Symbol features	Images are not set up as a set or system so there can be a lot of inconsistency in available images. There can be little control on the quality of available images
No. of symbols	Large - over 240,000 photographs
Range of symbols	Large
Training	None known
Copyright	To acknowledge the artist's accomplishments, morguefile ask that you credit the photographer when possible and that any questions regarding liabilities should be directed to the specific photographer.
Other	Morguefile has not reviewed all of the material posted to the website and say that they are not responsible for the materials content, use or effects.

Design forms, posters, task sheets, lists, pointing charts and appointment cards

CD-based symbols collections resource packs, guidelines, training resources, presentations and customer support web pages

6. The Valuing People ClipArt Collection (www.inspiredservices.org.uk)

Format	Available on a memory stick / USB flash drive – licensed for use on 1 computer only. Need to ring Inspired Services to get a serial / licence number the first time you run the programme.
Version	Valuing People Clipart Collection 2009 Version
Cost	Cost of the 2009 edition is ST£129.25, £82.25 for self advocacy groups, ST£58.75 for upgrades to the 2009 edition, £35.25 for clipart subscription where all their new pictures every month are e-mailed on. Prices include VAT. Need to contact Inspired Services if want a licence to use it on more than one computer or a network.
Trial	Can view all images on website above. These are covered by copyright and cannot be used in any form whatsoever unless purchased. Can sign up on the website freestuff pages to receive

	an activation e-mail which allow access to free clipart among other things.
Supplier	Inspired Services Publishing Ltd.
Creator	Inspired Services Publishing Ltd is an English company who describe themselves as a one-stop shop for all your accessible information needs
Origin	The collection was started when members of the National forum of people with learning difficulties wanted quality colour illustrations for their documents. The spoke to an artist who drew the pictures they wanted. All pictures are recommended and checked out as suitable by their consultative group of people with learning disabilities.
How to use	Choose one of thirty categories of pictures. Scroll through thumbnails of pictures. No labels on pictures.
Flexibility	Cannot change content of images
Symbol features	Full colour illustrations. Some have a square box around the pictures. For others the edges are the outline of the figures themselves.
No. of symbols	Almost 2,000 full colour images.
Range of symbols	Images are split into 30 categories covering aspects of day-to-day life
Training	Have web based help pages if you are having difficulties getting the collection working.
Copyright	
Other	Valuing People ClipArt has published accessible documents on issues for people with disabilities: 'Stay up late', 'Who Cares for Us', 'Abuse Campaign' & 'A life like any other'

7.Change Picture Bank (www.changepeople.co.uk)

Format	Some can be downloaded immediately after payment. Others are available on cd.
Version banks	Single user and network versions available for picture
Cost	£2.50 for single pictures. Bundles (i.e. sets of up to 50 pictures grouped by topic) £79 or £112. These are jpeg files which can be downloaded immediately after payment or can invoice. Picture banks (i.e. cd roms with sets of 100s of pictures grouped by topic) cost £200 to £425 for single user licence, £360 to £685 for small multiple user licence (2-10 users), £650 to £1150 for medium multiple user licence (11-50 users), £1200 to £2100 for large multiple user licence (51+ users)
Trial	Can search their website for pictures. Can see pictures in bundles on website before you buy.

Supplier	CHANGE
Creator	The words to pictures team of CHANGE make the pictures. The team is made up of experienced people with learning disabilities and artists.
Origin	CHANGE is a national equal rights organisation in the UK led by people with learning disabilities.
How to use	On website type in name of picture you require to purchase on it's own. Various options are shown.
Flexibility	Can adapt them with speech bubbles and arrows to communicate specific messages. Can submit requests for pictures
Symbol features	Black and white line drawings
No. of symbols	Large
Range of symbols	Range of topics for picture bundles and banks.
Training	They provide 1 day training on how to make information easy at their office in Leeds or at your own location.
Copyright	
Other	