# Making information easier to read

#### What this is about

About 1 in 6 of the general public have problems with reading and writing. We know that this is much more common in people in contact with the criminal justice system and that people with a range of learning disabilities and learning difficulties are over-represented. Evidence from the Prison Reform Trust shows that about 1 in 3 adult prisoners have such difficulties (up to 7% have an IQ under 70, and another 25% have an IQ under 80). The kinds of everyday problems that this group of people face include reading (for example, newspapers, bills, letters, posters, texts and emails) and writing (for example, filling out forms). We are constantly bombarded with written information, yet a lot of people cannot make sense of it.

## What this means in practice

This means that many people using your service will find it hard to read any of your written information, such as posters, information about rights, appointment letters and directions or maps. They will struggle to fill out forms or to comply with instructions. This makes it likely they will get into more trouble.

## What you can do

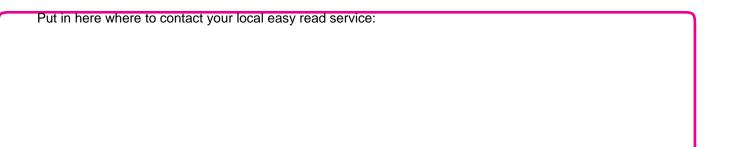
It is important to find out what help people may need with completing forms or understanding and following written instructions. People are usually relieved if they are offered help and will usually accept it. Simply ask if they need help, rather than if they can read. This reduces stigma and gives a chance for you and the person to develop a better understanding. It is very helpful for all material produced by your service to be in a more accessible style. This involves using easy words and short sentences, and ideally pictures to illustrate points. Many local areas have a group of people with learning disabilities who can adapt information into a more accessible format (also called easy read).

### Tips on making information easier

There are different ways that information can be made easier. Here are some general tips:

- Use short sentences. Have just one idea in each sentence
- Text should be in a large font size, minimum 14pt
- Use easy words. Explain any complicated words or terms if you do have to use them
- Use A4 pages wherever possible. A5 or smaller are not so easy
- Consider using images (photos or drawings) to aid understanding. Choose an image to represent each sentence of text if possible. Put images on the left hand side of the page and text on the right (see example)
- Choose a plain font. Avoid fancy fonts and italics.





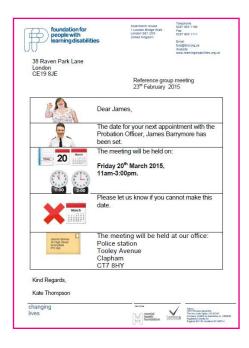
#### **Further information**

If you would like to find out more about how to make information more accessible see: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities/a-to-z/e/easy-read

KeyRing has examples of relevant easy read information: <a href="https://www.keyring.org/cjs-easyread">www.keyring.org/cjs-easyread</a>

The Change picture bank has images about the criminal justice free to people working in this area: http://www.changepeople.org/gallery/media-gallery

Below is an example of an appointment letter that has been adapted into an easier to read format:



This is part of a series of fact sheets for people working in the criminal justice system. They are how to spot signs that a person has a learning disability; finding out about other services that may help; communication; making information easier to read; making appointments; making decisions; useful information and resources. To download these or for more information see:

https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities/our-work/rights-equality/criminal-justice-%20system/

