

#### Contents

This briefing is split into 5 sections. Click on the following hyperlinks to go to a section:

- [Introduction and Purpose](#)
- [Top Tips for Accessible Written Communications](#)
- [Clear Print](#)
- [Easy Read](#) and
- [Further Resources](#).

#### Introduction and Purpose

We, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), use our communications to help people, communities and organisations be aware of, understand and be engaged in our work and services. Communications play an important part in the planning and delivery of our services, and we want everyone to be able to get involved in decisions that affect them, whether it is about planning or receiving a service.

Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another. It is a two-way process. All staff have a responsibility to ensure that our communications are clear and of good quality. This includes making our communications accessible so that those who we engage with have their communication needs at the centre of the services we deliver.

We have a legal duty to remove communication barriers and ensure that people we support can access our services or take part in active and meaningful engagement and planning of them. The Equalities Act 2010 requires service providers, including Local Authorities and NHS Health Boards, to provide accessible information and communication support as part of their duty to make reasonable adjustments for people with a disability.

Across our HSCP, we are committed to a shared responsibility for accessible communications. This includes supporting the communications needs of the people, communities and organisations who communicate and engage with us. We make this commitment within our HSCP's Communications Strategy.

This briefing provides some top tips for staff to improve their written communications and make them more accessible. It is not meant to be a comprehensive 'how to' guide but assists in embedding a number of good practice standards into our communications. It also includes links to further resources.

If you have any queries about the content of this briefing, please contact [GCHSCP\\_Communications@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:GCHSCP_Communications@glasgow.gov.uk).

**Top Tips for Accessible Written Communications**

There are good practice standards to follow when creating accessible written communications, whether it be for letters, reports, leaflets or emails among others. They are 'industry standard' and endorsed for use across the public, private and third sectors. The standards help to ensure that written communications are accessible for a wide range of audiences. They are not meant to advise on what method of communication to use. You will need to bear in mind your audience and their preferred method of communication.

The following top tips are examples of how you can communicate more effectively and accessibly in your written communications, by using Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) Clear Print guidelines and through creating Easy Read documents.

### Clear Print

Clear Print is RNIB's print design guidelines for all types of documents to maximise their legibility. Whilst the guidelines are for print documents such as letters and leaflets, their principles can be applied to electronic forms of written communications such as email. The guidelines have been created to enable everyday information to be immediately accessed by more people. Because Clear Print guidelines are designed to meet the communication needs of a range of audiences, their consistent use in documents is more likely to increase the reach of communication audiences. Clear Print can be particularly helpful for people who have visual impairments or dyslexia.

Clear Print is not the same as Large Print. Whereas Clear Print is appropriate as a standard for all printed information, Large Print is an alternative format and is essential for some disabled people, for example, people with visual impairments, learning disabilities, dyslexia and problems with coordination or manual dexterity.

### Top Tips for Achieving Clear Print

- ✓ For Clear Print use a minimum **type size** of 12 point, though 14 point is recommended. For Large Print use a minimum type size of 16 point, though 18 point is recommended. Page numbers, footnotes, subscripts and superscripts and image captions should all be the same size as the body text. Headings can be in larger text to differentiate them from body text.
- ✓ You should not refer to a document as being **Large Print** unless it conforms with this standard. Large Print documents should also conform to other Clear Print guidelines concerning layout, use of fonts and images. Reading long documents, even in Large Print, can be tiring for people with low vision. You should reduce the length of text as much as possible. If you are promoting a Large Print version of a document, then ensure that this is clearly displayed at the beginning or on the front, in text that conforms to Large Print standards.
- ✓ Use a legible **typeface**, preferably a 'sans serif' font, and avoiding anything stylised. The font you choose should be clear such as Arial or Calibri.
- ✓ Use sentence case and avoid using **italics**, **underlining** and large blocks of **capital letters** because they make text difficult to read. Underlining can be used for **hyperlinks** (a link that directs the reader to another document or information that is located elsewhere, for example, in a records management system or on a webpage). Where a hyperlink is included in an electronic version of a document, it should be understandable text on its own and not the full address of where the link is located.

- ✓ Use **bold** sparingly, only highlight a few words rather than a paragraph.
- ✓ Use adequate **line spacing**. Spacing between lines should not be cramped. Avoid hyphenated words split over two lines. There should be line spacing between paragraphs.
- ✓ Keep text **layout** clear, simple and consistent. Alignment of body text should be left aligned, not right aligned or justified. Set text horizontally, not on a slant. All text should be the same orientation on the page. Documents with single, continuous columns of text are easier to make accessible than ones with a more complex layout. Keep headings and page numbers in the same place on each page.
- ✓ Provide a good **contrast** between text and background. Black on white offers the strongest contrast, but for some people different colour combinations or coloured paper can be easier and more comfortable to read. Do not use colour alone to convey information, as some people cannot differentiate between different colours. Sometimes individuals will require different **colour schemes**. For example, someone with a visual impairment or who is colour blind may need an alternative background. You should produce alternative colour schemes when required.
- ✓ Avoid overlapping **text and images**. Any information conveyed through images or in colour should be described, and any image in an electronic version of a document should have alternative text embedded into it that describes the image (commonly referred to as 'alt-text'). Do not run writing over images. Photographs should have a caption describing their content, which is normally positioned below photographs.
- ✓ Use matt, non-glossy **paper**, as it is non-reflective and helps to eliminate glare from lights. Ensure it is thick or opaque enough to prevent print showing through.

#### Easy Read

Producing information in 'Easy Read' format involves creating content with plain language using short, simple sentences to communicate information more clearly, and can include the use of images. Easy Read is one way of making information easier and more accessible for people with a learning disability. Making information easier is about working with and supporting the people that the information is for. Easy Read is often also preferred by readers without a learning disability, as it gives essential information on a topic without a lot of background information, and it can be helpful for people who are not fluent in English.

Creating information in Easy Read format includes the following considerations:

- a clear heading, author, date, background / reason and summary
- words and content that are easy to understand
- document and sentence lengths that are short and simple
- images that make information clear and
- a layout that is easy to read and understand.

#### Top Tips for Achieving Easy Read Content

To make this easier to use, we have split this into 4 sections, which you can directly go to by clicking on the hyperlinks

- [Words and Content](#)
- [Grammar, Punctuation and Numbers](#)
- [Length and Layout](#) and
- [Images](#).

#### Words and Content

- ✓ Use **simple words** that are easier to understand. Avoid using jargon or complicated / technical words as much as possible. If you have to use **jargon or complicated / technical words**, then say what they mean by explaining or providing a definition of them. Do this in the next sentence, not as part of the same sentence. Also consider creating a glossary at the end of your document to explain any complicated / technical words.
- ✓ Use **full words**. It is best not to use acronyms or abbreviations. If **acronyms** are well known by your target audience, then they can be used. You should use the full title when the word or title appears for the first time, with the acronym in brackets. Also consider including a glossary of them at the end of your document.

### Grammar, Punctuation and Numbers

- ✓ Traditional rules of grammar need not necessarily apply. Use **language** that sounds natural when spoken. For example, it is fine to end a sentence with a preposition or start one with 'and' or 'but'.
- ✓ **Full stops** are fine but avoid using too many or difficult punctuation such as colons.
- ✓ Use **commas** to separate items in a list in preference to semi-colons.
- ✓ Do not use **contractions** and avoid **apostrophes**, except where they indicate possession.
- ✓ Never use to break words at the end of lines. Always start a new line. But do use hyphens for words such as 'well-being'.
- ✓ Use half, a quarter, 1 in 5 in preference to **percentages**.
- ✓ When referring to percentages, use numbers such as 75 out of 100 where possible or per cent rather than the symbol **hyphens** '%' where it is not. Use whole numbers rather than ones with decimals, unless greater accuracy is required.
- ✓ Express all **numbers** as figures, including 1 to 10. However, for large numbers such as millions use 5 million, 20 million and so on.
- ✓ **Dates** should follow the format Friday 31 December 2021. Do not abbreviate the year to 21 or '21.
- ✓ Use a 12 hour clock to express **time**, as opposed to a 24 hour one. You may decide to use am or pm, for example 8am to 6pm.

### Length and Layout

- ✓ Document **length** should be as short as possible. More than 20 pages is generally too long. If there are more, consider breaking the text up into more than one document.
- ✓ Keep **sentences** short and succinct. Talk about 1 idea per sentence, and there should be no more than 10 to 15 words.
- ✓ Make sentences active not passive, and avoid idioms and questions.
- ✓ Include a **contents list / page** for longer documents with sections.

- ✓ **Order** your information in a logical step-by-step way, and include headings / subheadings where information can be grouped together.
- ✓ Start new **chapters** or **topics** on a new page.
- ✓ **Layout** should be consistent with Clear Print guidelines (see above).

#### Images

- ✓ Using **images** such as photographs, graphics, graphs and diagrams alongside written information can be a useful way to communicate the information and make it more understandable and engaging for the reader.
- ✓ Photographs of real people or places can be very useful but ones from **image banks** can be used. Always seek and obtain explicit permission from individuals in photographs and / or copyright holders. Use familiar images, and the same style of image.
- ✓ Images should be **presented** as big and clear as possible, and they should be positioned next to the text that they relate to, following Clear Print guidelines (see above).
- ✓ Use images to **convey** one point or chunk of information.
- ✓ When a document is introduced by a **foreword** from a senior figure, always include their photograph. When you are preparing an **agenda** for a meeting / conference, photographs of speakers are helpful to the reader.

#### Further Resources

There are further resources available for accessible communications that staff can access or refer to, which provide support or more detailed guidance to assist HSCP staff to communicate in different ways.

#### Interpretation and Translation Resources

Glasgow City Council's [Cordia Linguistics](#) (based within Glasgow City HSCP) provides interpretation and translation services, offering face-to-face interpreting, telephone interpreting, written translations and interpreter training. It has access to 150 interpreters, and together they are fluent in over 70 languages. A service is available 7 days a week through appointments.

Glasgow City Council also has an in-house [Sign Language Interpreter Service \(SLIS\)](#) that operates on an appointment basis.

[Contact Scotland BSL](#) provides a telephone video relay service that can be used to call / receive calls from British Sign Language Users. Calls can be made to any service provider (public, voluntary or private sector) including contacting a GP to making an appointment at a hairdresser or booking an MOT for a car. It also provides a video relay service for Deaf British Sign Language Users. A service is available 24 hours / 7 days a week throughout the year.

[NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Interpreting Service](#) also provides a range of interpreting and translation services including face-to-face interpreting, telephone interpreting, British Sign Language and written translations. It has access to 12 fulltime interpreters and around 300 sessional interpreters for face-to-face interpreting. A face-to-face service is available 7 days a week through appointments. A telephone interpreting service is provided by Capita and is also available via a mobile app. A service is available 24 hours / 7 days a week throughout the year.

Evidence has shown that accessing Mental Health Services is difficult for individuals within the deaf community, with people often presenting in Mental Health crisis.

To help support people from the Deaf BSL community in their Mental Health Recovery, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has a Deaf Mental Health Peer Support Worker to support people accessing Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) in their recovery journey, including ones in Glasgow City HSCP (Brand Street, Riverside and Auchinlea). People referred for Deaf Mental Health Peer Support require to communicate using BSL, be receiving service from one of the above GGC Adult CMHT's and have an identified key worker. If you have a patient who may benefit from this service please discuss any



potential referrals with [Michael.Gribben@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Michael.Gribben@ggc.scot.nhs.uk), CPN/Peer Support Worker Supervisor, Riverside CMHT, or with Paul McCusker at [Paul.Mccusker2@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Paul.Mccusker2@ggc.scot.nhs.uk). Patient information on Peer Support is available in [British Sign Language with subtitles and voice over](#) and in [written format](#).

#### **Guidance on Accessible Communications**

[Accessible Communication Formats](#) (gov.uk)

[Designing with Clear and Large Print](#) (Sensory Trust)

[Making Written Information Easier to Understand for People with Learning Disabilities: Guidance for People Who Commission or Produce Easy Read Information](#) (Department of Health)

[Plain English Guides](#) (Plain English Campaign)

[Designing with Plain Language](#) (Sensory Trust)

[Clear to All: Creating Clear Information for Everyone](#) (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde) – only accessible to authorised users of NHSGGC's StaffNet

[Making Communication Accessible for All: A Guide for Health and Social Care Staff](#) (Health and Social Care Board)

[Understanding Accessibility Requirements for Public Sector Bodies](#) (gov.uk)

[Glasgow City HSCP Web Accessibility Guidance](#) (Glasgow City HSCP)