Standards for co-producing written information about adult social care

Information that is easy to find and understand helps people to make choices and decisions about care and support.

People working in Adult Social Care in Doncaster also need good information to support us to follow the law and do our jobs well.

This guide should help us all to **co-produce** written information about Adult Social Care in Doncaster.

Co-production happens when people with lived experience work alongside people working in organisations on an equal basis.

They agree what good looks like and work together to achieve it.

This guide has been **co-produced** by the Adult Social Care Information and Advice Working Group.

The group is made up of people who work in Adult Social Care and people with lived experience of care and support.

Remember: Often the best sources of information and advice are people we know and trust.

It is important that Adult Social Care staff are known and trusted sources of information and advice in our communities.

It is also important that we prioritise connections and relationships when we're working with people and families, to make sure they are – and can continue to be – part of communities who share information and look out for each other.

What the law says

The Care Act 2014 is a law about care and support for adults in England.

The Care Act 2014 says local councils must make sure that people can get information and advice about care and support.

It says that information and advice must be **accessible**.

Accessible information is information that is easy for disabled people to find and to understand.

The Equality Act 2010 is a law that makes sure all people in Britain are treated fairly.

The Equality Act 2010 says that local councils must provide information in **accessible formats**.

Accessible formats are different ways of presenting and providing information to make it accessible to disabled people.

Easy read, large print, audio, British Sign Language and braille are all types of accessible format.

The **Accessible Information Standard** is a rule that health and social care organisations must follow.

It says that disabled people should get information in a format that is accessible.

It also says disabled people should get support with communication if they need it.

The Standard says that health and social care organisations must

- ask people if they have any communication needs or need to be given information in a certain format

- keep a record of people's accessible information and communication needs and how they can be met

- make sure people's records flag this information so other people who look at their records can find it easily

- share the information with other health and social care organisations

- meet people's requirements for accessible information and communication support

Types of written information

This guide covers the following types of written information.

1. Public information

This is information and advice about care and support aimed at people living in Doncaster.

2. Policies

This is information that says why we do things and sets out rules around what must and must not happen.

Policies help us all to make decisions and make sure we follow the law and our practice framework.

3. Practice guidance

This is information aimed at people working in Adult Social Care.

It includes:

- Principles – key messages that underpin practice

- Procedures – information about how to work

- Processes –step-by-step instructions on what to do

4. Strategy

This is information about where we want to get to, and how we plan to get there.

Our Adult Social Care practice framework says we will be open and honest.

This means we should write all this information with the expectation that it will be available to, and understood by, Doncaster citizens.

Co-producing information

Co-producing information is the best way of making sure it is useful and easy to understand.

Start by finding a few people who you know will be interested in the subject and arranging a good time to get together for a chat.

Don't start with a finished document and ask people to approve it!

Accept this means it might take longer to produce the information, but on the plus side, the final product will be great!

Check what we should be communicating about the subject.

The Care and support statutory guidance has lots of information to help.

Focus on key messages. What are the most important things that people want to know? What do we need people to know?

Decide who should produce the information.

Who would like to write some words? Think about other formats too. Does someone in the group want to talk on a video? Would someone else like to film them?

Would anyone like to include a story about their experience to help bring the information to life?

Make sure people are involved from the blank piece of paper stage to the finished product, not just consulted part way through.

Standards

Please follow these standards to make written information clear and easy to understand.

1. Keep it easy to read

Produce information in an easy read format as standard.

If more detail is needed, produce a longer document too.

Use Photosymbols images at the left-hand side of your text to make it easier to understand.

Put hard words in bold and explain what they mean.

2. Keep it active

Write in an active voice so it is clear who is responsible.

For example: 'We will respond to all complaints...' not 'Complaints will be responded to...'
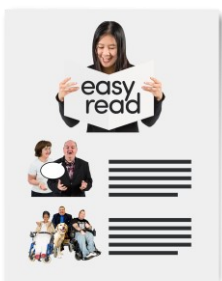
3. Keep it short

Less is more. Keep information concise and stick to the main points.

Use short sentences – aim for no more than 15-20 words per sentence.

Use short paragraphs with no more than 3 or 4 sentences.

4. Keep it simple

Use everyday words that you'd use with your own family and friends.

Avoid using 'professional' language that is hard for people to understand. This is called **jargon**.

Limit the use of **acronyms**. Acronyms are words made from the first letters of each word in a name, like CQC, DBTH.

If you need to use hard words or acronyms, make sure you explain what they mean. Don't assume people will already know.

More standards

5. Keep it personal

Use 'you' to refer to the audience – the people who will read the information.

Use 'we' or 'us' to refer to the council or a team or service.

Use 'we all' or 'all of us' to refer to everyone.

6. Keep it useful

Co-producing our information means it is more likely to be useful information that will help people.

Always include information about where to get more information, with contact details.

Make sure policies and practice guidance include:

- the name of the people or group who wrote the document
- the name of the person or group who approved it
- the date it was approved
- the publication date
- the date when it will be reviewed

Language

The language we use matters.

Always use language that is plain, respectful and kind.

If we don't think about our language, we may use words that confuse, hurt, blame or exclude people. Or words that make it sound like people are different to us or are not human beings.

We may also use words to describe how we work that don't fit with the ambitions and values in our practice framework.

Please use our **Adult Social Care language guide** to understand more about why language matters, and words to use and to avoid.

Approval

Please send written information to the Adult Social Care Information and Advice Working Group for approval.

The group meets on the third Monday of each month.

Please send information to Bryony Shannon (bryony.shannon@doncaster.gov.uk) for consideration and approval by the group.

Storing and finding written information

The Support for Adults section of the Your Life Doncaster website is the main place to store and find general information and advice about care and support in Doncaster.

https://www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/support-for-adults

This is the place to store and find information about living well in Doncaster.

Information and advice in this section will help people to find support that prevents, reduces or delays the need for Adult Social Care services.

This includes information about equipment and technology, community groups, benefits and managing money, support for carers, and people's rights.

The Adult Social Care section of the Doncaster Council website is the main place to store and find information about Adult Social Care.

https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/adult-social-care

This is the place to store and find information about how Adult Social Care works in Doncaster.

This includes information about how to contact Adult Social Care, finding the right support, paying for care and support and safeguarding.

It also includes our policies and practice guidance.

Accessible formats

To make sure our information is easy for people to find and understand, we need to make it available in a range of **accessible formats**.

If our written information follows the standards in this guide, it will already be accessible to a lot of people.

If we make this information available on Your Life Doncaster and the council website, it can be found and shared in a variety of other accessible formats.
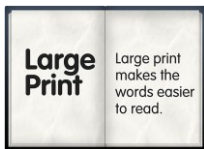
The text can be made bigger.

Information can be read aloud and can be translated into different languages.

Information can be printed, saved, emailed and converted into an MP3 audio file.

This means lots of people will be able to find and use the information themselves if they have access to the internet.

We or other people can also print the information off for people who don't have access to the internet, or use it as the basis for conversations or other communication.

If you have any comments or questions about this guide, please contact Bryony Shannon, Strategic Lead for Practice Development

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These standards were co-produced by the Adult Social Care Information and Advice Working Group in February 2024.

City of Doncaster Council