



Accessible information

Tanya Camberwell – Engagement Officer

healthwatch
Somerset

Accessibility



Is a massive subject

Everyone stay calm

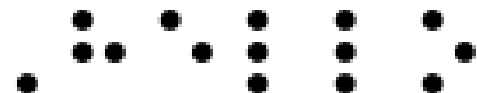


What is accessibility?

Accessibility: able to be entered or used by everyone, including people who have a disability.

It's about removing barriers that prevent people from accessing and engaging with information, services, and environments.

Accessibility varies based on individual abilities and circumstances; what is easy for some may be difficult or impossible for others.



The law: The big one

The Equality Act 2012:

A legal duty on all service providers to take steps or make “reasonable adjustments” to avoid putting a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage when compared to a person who is not disabled.

The protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation



Which protected characteristics could apply to these people?

Other important Acts of Parliament

The Accessible Information Standard (AIS):

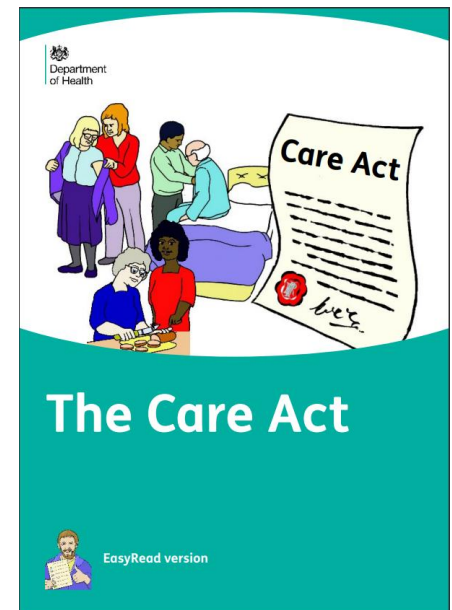
The standard aims to ensure people who have a disability or sensory loss get information they can access and understand, and any communication support that they need.

The NHS Constitution:

NHS bodies and private and voluntary sector providers supplying NHS services are required by law to take account of the NHS Constitution in their decisions and actions.

The Care Act:

Specific duties for local authorities with regards to the provision of advice and information.



The Accessible Information Standard

- First published in 2016 and updated in June 2025.
- It helps disabled and sensory-impaired people get support with communication when accessing health and care services.
- Laws like the Equality Act 2010 and Care Act 2014 offer some legal protection.
- Parts of the AIS are not yet legally binding.
- At the moment, providers are expected to 'consider' the standard.
- Providers cannot be legally forced to follow it until official government rules are put in place.
- Even though there have been versions of the AIS since 2016, studies show that many people with disabilities or sensory impairments still do not have reliable access to the information and communication support they need.

Accessible Information Standard steps

NHS and Social care services should.....



1. Ask

Find out if you have any information or communication needs and what they are.



2. Record

Clearly write down your needs and save them in a systematic way.



3. Alert

Have a clear sign or alert on your records to show your support needs.



4. Share

Safely share your needs with other health or care services when needed.



5. Meet needs

Give you understandable information and the right support to help you communicate.



6. Review

Regularly review your needs and update your records if anything changes.

If you believe your local health or care service is failing to meet your communications needs, you can:

- Give feedback or make a formal complaint via the NHS or council complaints processes.
- Share your experience with Healthwatch Somerset by calling us free on: **0800 999 1286.**
- Contact a local councillor or your local MP.

Accessible information/communication

Impairments:

- Auditory
- Cognitive
- Learning
- Motor
- Neurodivergence
- Physical
- Speech
- Seizure disorders
- Visual

Formats:

Visual – audio, audio description, Braille, Moon, telephone.

Learning disabilities and literacy difficulties – audio, audio description, easy read, Makaton, subtitles.

Hearing – British Sign Language, Makaton, subtitling, textphone, SMS.

Co-ordination difficulties – large print, audio, audio description, telephone.

Think:



Not all needs and disabilities are obvious.

NAFOF – Never assume, find out first.

Health literacy

More than:

- 4 in 10 adults struggle with health content for the public.
- 6 in 10 struggle with health content that includes numbers and statistics.

Health literacy is about having the:

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Confidence

to access, understand, and use health information.

Impacts of low health literacy:

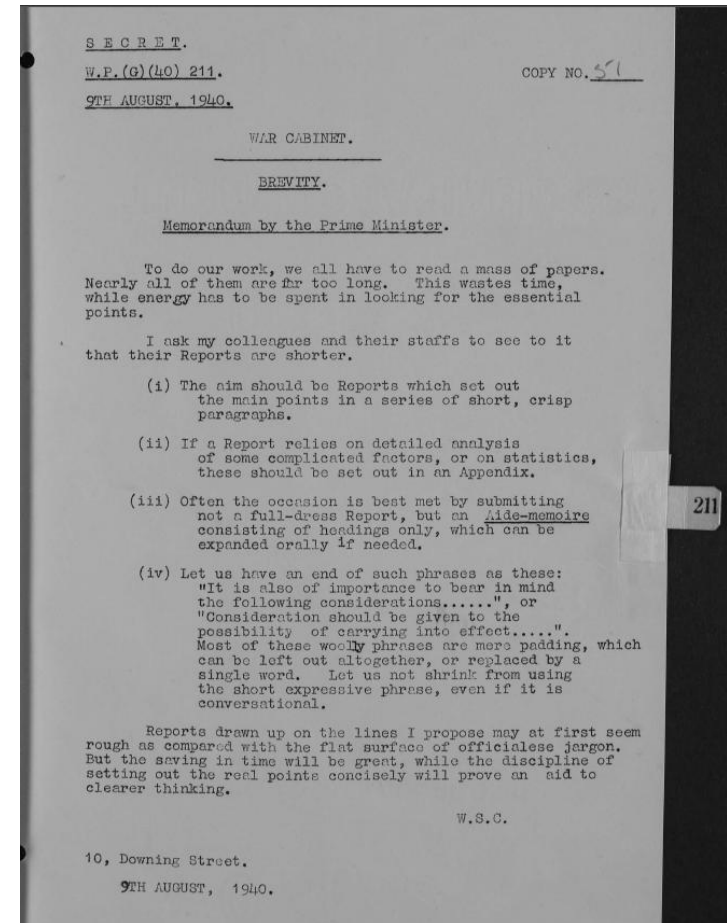
- Problems communicating with healthcare professionals (85%).
- Being vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation (83%).
- Problems navigating the health and care system (79%).

Readability – everyone benefits

Aim for a target reading age of 9–11.	• Understand the words on a more complicated poster and simply worded leaflets. • Understand a short, formal letter, note or form. Undertake a call to 111. • Describe types and levels of pain in more detail. • Understand what they've been prescribed by a clinician.
Clear/plain language.	A message that is clear and simple and written with the reader in mind. Avoid jargon.
Sentence case.	PUTTING EVERYTHING IN CAPITAL LETTERS MAKES CONTENT HARDER TO READ.
Short sentences and paragraphs.	An average sentence length of 15 to 20 words. Paragraph length of 1 – 5 sentences.
Active voice.	Active sentences have more impact and are easier to understand.

A note on plain language

- It is not 'dumbing' down.
- It can be used for any communication.
- It combines good sentence and paragraph structure, tone of voice, grammar, and punctuation.
- It cuts out useless words.
- It is not an amateur's method of communication.
- It's not as easy as people think.
- It's not new. Winston Churchill issued a 'Brevity' Memo to the War Cabinet' in 1940.



Readability –everyday

Readability score 1: 46.12
(40 – 50 Challenging)

From time to time, I send out separate engagement emails through our official system announcing/highlighting projects and reports, would you like me to add you to that list too?

AI can be helpful but use with caution.



goblin.tools

<https://goblin.tools/Formalizer>

Readability score 2: 74.81
(70 – 80 Easy)

Sometimes, I send out emails through our official system about new projects and reports. Would you like me to include you on that list?



Microsoft Copilot

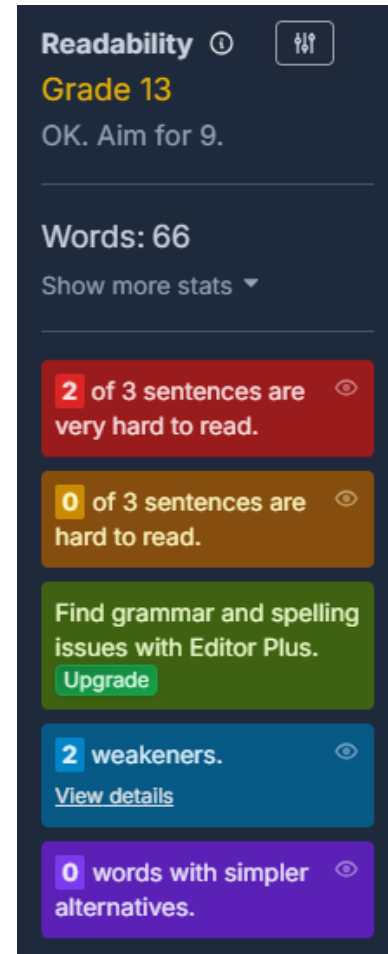
Readability – public communication

For Anytown NHS Foundation Trust, with around 1,000 inpatient beds across acute, community and mental health sites, just the time saving of a shorter and easier urine collection process saves about £166,000 a year.

In practice this time can be spent on other patient-facing care tasks and vital laboratory work, making the health system more efficient.

<https://hemingwayapp.com/>

Hemingway
Editor



The screenshot shows the Hemingway Editor interface. At the top, it says 'Readability' with a help icon and a user icon. Below that, it shows 'Grade 13' in yellow, followed by 'OK. Aim for 9.' in white. A horizontal line separates this from the next section, which says 'Words: 66' and 'Show more stats' with a dropdown arrow. Below this, there are four colored boxes with feedback: a red box stating '2 of 3 sentences are very hard to read.', a brown box stating '0 of 3 sentences are hard to read.', a green box with the text 'Find grammar and spelling issues with Editor Plus.' and an 'Upgrade' button, and a blue box stating '2 weakeners.' with a 'View details' link. At the bottom, a purple box states '0 words with simpler alternatives.'

Readability – public communication (after)

Anytown NHS Foundation Trust has around 1,000 hospital beds across different types of services. Saving time on the urine collection process can save about £166,000 each year.

This time can be used to take better care of patients and to do important laboratory work.

The screenshot shows a readability analysis tool interface. At the top, it says 'Readability' with an information icon and a settings icon. Below that, it displays 'Grade 8' in green and 'Good.' in white. A section for 'Words: 54' includes a 'Show more stats' link. The main body contains four colored boxes with feedback: a red box stating '0 of 4 sentences are very hard to read.', a brown box stating '1 of 4 sentences is hard to read.', a green box for 'Find grammar and spelling issues with Editor Plus.' with an 'Upgrade' button, a blue box stating '1 weakener.' with a 'View details' link, and a purple box stating '0 words with simpler alternatives.' Each box has an eye icon for more details.

Readability ⓘ ⚙️

Grade 8

Good.

Words: 54

Show more stats ▾

0 of 4 sentences are very hard to read. ⓘ

1 of 4 sentences is hard to read. ⓘ

Find grammar and spelling issues with Editor Plus.

Upgrade

1 weakener. ⓘ

[View details](#)

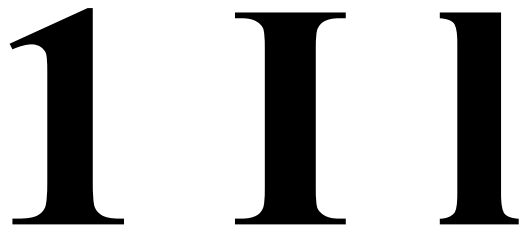
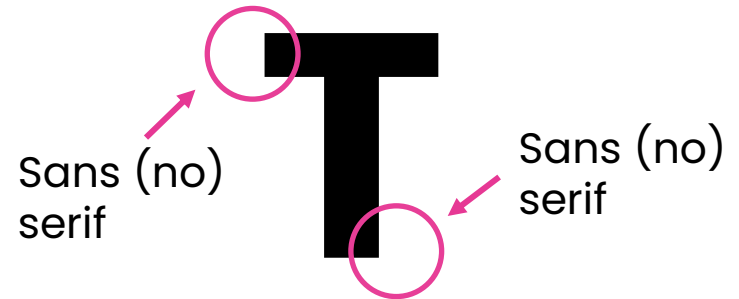
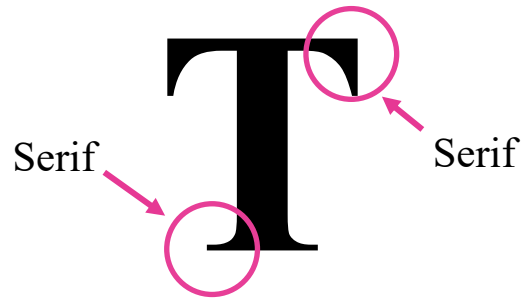
0 words with simpler alternatives. ⓘ

Accessibility – some basics

Font type. Poppins 12 pt – 111 Arial 12 pt – 111 Times New Roman 12 pt – 111	Accessible fonts should be simple, clear, and avoid decorative elements. Simple Sans serif and Serif fonts such as Arial or Times New Roman. Avoid italics, underlining, simulated handwriting, unusual shaped letters and decorative typefaces.
Font size.	A minimum font size of 12pt Arial for body text. Some are now recommending 14pt minimum.
Colour contrast.	Use high colour contrasts. These are easier to read. Avoid putting text directly on images.
Alignment.	Left aligned text, without justification makes it easier to find the start and finish of each line and ensures even spacing between words.
Camel case for #.	#openmentalhealth ✗ #OpenMentalHealth ✓
Images.	Image descriptions (Alt text) should be added to all non-decorative images, memes, and GIFs. Only use 1 or 2 emoji's and check their meaning.

Serif and Sans Serif fonts

Serifs are the small lines (flourishes) attached to letters.



Serif font:
Times new Roman bold



Sans serif font:
Poppins bold

Colour contrast

Contrast Checker

[Home](#) > [Resources](#) > Contrast Checker

Foreground
Hex Value
#E73E97
Color Picker
Alpha
1
Lightness

Background
Hex Value
#FFFFFF
Color Picker
Lightness

Contrast Ratio
3.79:1
[permalink](#)

Normal Text

WCAG AA: **Fail**
WCAG AAA: **Fail**

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Large Text

WCAG AA: **Pass**
WCAG AAA: **Fail**

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Graphical Objects and User Interface Components

WCAG AA: **Pass**

★
Text Input



<https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

Low
Contrast
Inaccessible
Font

High
Contrast
Accessible
Font

Putting it all together



If you support a family member or friend who cannot manage alone, you are a carer.



You may not think you're a carer because you love the person you support.

You don't need Carer's Allowance to be recognised as a carer or access support.

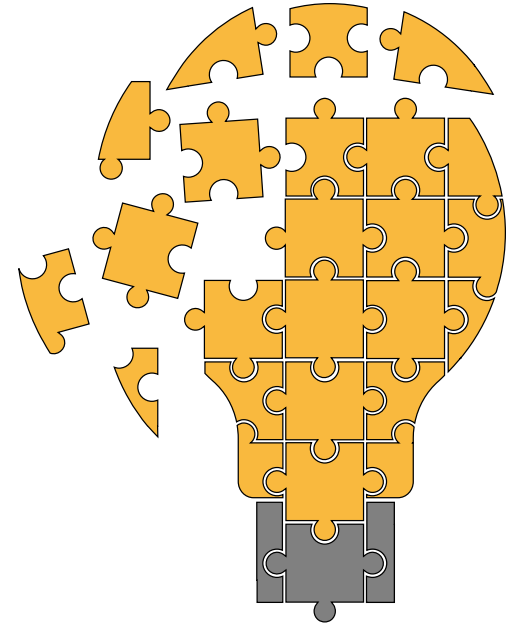
Talk to a member of staff about our carer support.

For more free information, advice, and support, call Somerset Carers Service:
0800 31 68 600



Final thoughts

- Keep it simple.
- Substance is just as important as style.
- Digital doesn't suit everyone.
- Teach back/Chunk and check spoken information.
- Involve your target users in new communications.
- Accessible communications take time and consideration.
- Alternative formats take time and money.



By applying plain language and basic accessibility to all your communications will increase your accessibility for everyone.

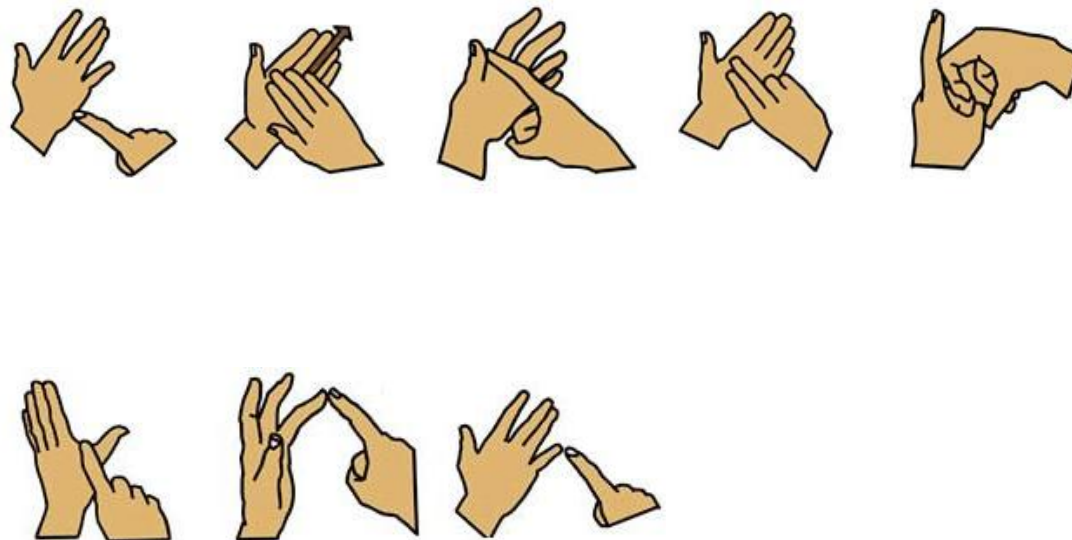
This type of communication will be easier to translate into different formats such as Easy Read.

Thank you



THANK YOU

Flat hand starts with fingertips on chin. Hand moves down and away from signer.



Created on www.british-sign.co.uk

Any questions?

For more information

Healthwatch Somerset
Suite 12, Wellworthys Business Centre
Parrett Way
Colley Lane
Bridgwater
TA6 5LB

www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

t: 0800 999 1286

e: info@healthwatchsomerset



 [@healthwatchsom.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/healthwatchsom.bsky.social)

 [Facebook.com/Healthwatchsomerset](https://www.facebook.com/Healthwatchsomerset)

 [@HealthwatchSomerset](https://www.instagram.com/HealthwatchSomerset)

healthwatch
Somerset