

Age Friendly Communications Checklist

- Involve older people in testing the resource you have produced by holding focus groups, doing questionnaires and providing opportunities for people to feedback on design before things are made public. Remember - when it comes to ageing, older people are experts by lived experience.
- Use positive language when speaking about older people. 'As we get older, we become more diverse, not less. Yet the language used in the pandemic lumps us all together as the 'over 70s' or the 'over 50s', and then frames us all in terms of our vulnerability.' (Alex Rotas, photographer for the "Old Frame New Picture" competition. 2020)
- Use positive and realistic images when promoting older people's services/activities that do not perpetuate stereotypes. It's not all about 'wrinkly hands' and 'walking sticks'.
- Keep information simple and easy to understand – this is where involving older people in your design can be especially useful.
- Avoid jargon. You want people to access your offer, so they need to know what you're talking about.
- Make sure that the information you are sharing is factual and evidence based. You have been given the opportunity to share information with an audience, its your duty to make sure this is good information.
- Consider the challenges older people using your service may face and be open to adapting your methods of delivery accordingly. One size does not fit all.
- Clearly communicate directions and advice that need to be followed in order to access your offer. For example, you may want to include the bus number which stops outside your venue so that people know how to get there.
- Use a range of engagement methods to reach older people. Have you thought about using the local radio, free newspapers, libraries or GP surgeries to promote your message?

Written Communication

- Put a publish date on your document so people know when it was produced.

- Communicate a variety of ways for people to book onto or contact your service. Do not just direct them to a website, as not everybody is online.
- Use pictures to illustrate information, this will improve accessibility especially for those with low literacy levels.
- Avoid complex graphs/charts – make sure the information you want people to see is easy to find.
- Use text with the highest possible background colour contrast e.g black text on yellow paper.
- Use font size 16-18.
- Leave a spacing of 25% of the font size in between lines.
- Use matte paper for posters/leaflets. A gloss paper may cause problems with glare for readers.
- Use plain English.
- Consider getting resources translated if you are engaging with people who may have language barriers.
- Keep sentences short – up to 20 words.

Verbal Communication

- Highlight key messages you are trying to convey and repeat them throughout your communication.
- Limit background noise when verbally communicating.
- Speak slowly and clearly with a good level of volume.
- Do not chew gum or eat while speaking.
- Always talk face to face as this will support with lip reading.
- Consider providing audio information of some of your written documents, for example reading your information guides on the local radio or working with sight loss charities such as Henshaws to improve access for residents.
- Be willing and ready to write the information down, provide opportunities for those listening to write it down, or offer them a printed version of the information which they can take away if this would benefit them.
- If delivering a powerpoint share printed copies of the slides for people to follow as you present and to take away for reflection.
- Give time and provide a prompt for the listener to ask questions.

- Consider inviting a translator if you are engaging with people who may have language barriers.
- Consider providing an induction loop for people with hearing aids.

Online Communication

- Think creatively about new channels to reach older people, particularly the growing number who are online.
- Provide logical and clear website navigation for bookings and information.
- Provide telephone support to talk people through navigating the website for the first time or have awareness within your service of local digital inclusion support to signpost people to if they need help using their digital device.

This document has been developed to enable you to make informed choices when providing age friendly communications.

The content of this checklist has been informed by:

<https://fantasticforfamilies.com/age-friendly-standards>

<https://www.independentage.org/get-advice/how-we-produce-our-information>

<https://monaghan.ie/communitydevelopment/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2016/11/Monaghan-Age-Friendly-Guide-to-Communication.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/developmaterials/audiences/olderadults/understanding-challenges.html>

<https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/valuable-not-vulnerable-how-greater-manchester-changing-narrative-ageing>

<https://www.aafp.org/fpm/2006/0900/p73.html>

<https://buzzmanchester.co.uk/learnaboutthehealth/thebetterinformationprogramme>

Please access the following links for free to use age friendly photographs for your communications:

Ageing Better Positive Image Library

<https://ageingbetter.resourcespace.com/pages/home.php>

SocietyPix photo database <https://gesellschaftsbilder.de/>

In addition to the check list we would like to share with you some brief information on the health conditions that can impact older adults' health literacy:

1. Cognitive Challenges

Aging results in normal changes in cognition. Three specific changes occur: reduced processing speed, greater tendency to be distracted, and reduced capacity to process and remember new information (working memory).

2. Visual Challenges

Many older adults have problems with vision. About 2/3 of adults with vision problems are older than 65.

3. Hearing Challenges

Hearing loss is common in older adults, affecting 1 in 3 people older than 60 and half of those older than 85.

Further sources of general health literacy information

Plain English Campaign: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>

How to write in Plain English: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf>

Teach back: <http://www.healthliteracyplace.org.uk/tools-and-techniques/techniques/teach-back/>

Chunk and check: <http://www.healthliteracyplace.org.uk/tools-and-techniques/techniques/chunk-and-check/>

Note: if you would like support in accessing written health literacy guidance then please speak with the buzz Knowledge Service. The Knowledge Service provides access to library, information and health promotion resources for people working in the health and social care sector in Manchester. Contact 0161 271 0505 or library@gmmh.nhs.uk