Review checklist for quality of 'easy-read' documents

This checklist should be used as a tool to review the quality of 'easy-read' information.

Use plain English
People with cognitive and language impairments are more likely to have difficulty processing and understanding written language. Such difficulties may be present for a variety of reasons including learning disability, stroke or brain injury. The person may not understand technical, infrequently used or complicated vocabulary. They may not understand complex punctuation or complex grammatical structure. Using simple, uncomplicated language makes information easier for everyone to understand.

	Tick
Unnecessary detail cut out – only key points expressed	
Information presented in a logical sequence	
Written as a person would speak	
No technical jargon – uses easy, every day words	
No abbreviations and acronyms used unless well known by target audience (e.g. NHS)	
If complicated words are used, a 'list of useful words' is include to explain them	
Short sentences – one main idea per sentence. E.g. sentences are broken into two sentences rather than linking with 'and'.	
Simple punctuation – avoids semicolons(;) colons (:) hyphens (-) or too many commas	
Active and personal language used (e.g. "you" and "we")	
Other pronouns avoided – "this, that, he, she, it, they, them"). Instead the person, place or object is named	
Does not use contracted negatives "don't, can't" etc. instead uses "do not, can not"	
Active sentence structures used (e.g. "the doctor will see you" not "you will be seen by the doctor").	
The same words and phrases are used consistently (even if they sound repetitive)	
Uses the number and not the word e.g. "2" not "two". Except very big numbers e.g. "2 million" not "2000000"	
No percentages, (example "1 in 10" not "10%")	
No big numbers – instead uses "a few", "lots of people" etc.	
Dates are in the format 'Saturday 31 July 2010'. Does not abbreviate the year	
No 24hr clock – uses am and pm	
Makes it clear if an action is required – e.g. states "send a reply"	

Symbols, drawings and photos
Supporting text with images is one of the most effective ways of making written information easier to understand. This is particularly helpful for people who have difficulties processing and understanding written information. It is important that the correct images are used to support written information otherwise the intended meaning may be lost.

	Tick
Image chosen that best explains the text	
Words and pictures linked together	
Does not use too many symbols	
Chosen images are not 'busy' – plain white backgrounds are best	
If writing about a specific place, an image of that place is used	
More than one image used to describe an idea if necessary linked with arrows, speech bubbles, thought bubbles and thumbs up/down	
Image placed at the left of the text	
Images as big as possible. If lots of pictures used A3 considered	

Layout and design

How written information is presented has an impact on how easily we are able to process and understand the information. People who have difficulties processing and understanding written language are more likely to understand the information if it is laid out in a specific way

	Tick
Larger print used – minimum 12pt but ideally 14pt	
Bigger font size used for titles and headings	
Clear typeface used. Ornate fonts avoided. Fonts with serifs avoided. Good fonts are Arial, Tahoma, verdana, calibri etc	
Good contrast between paper colour and type.	
No yellow type and reverse type (white on colour background)	
Matt paper used. Does not use a shiny finish	
Good quality paper used that does not have reverse print showing through	
No writing over pictures	
No BLOCK CAPITALS, *Italics,* or underlining	
Important points highlighted in **bold**	
Text aligned to the right side. Does not centralise or justify text	
Words are not broken up with a hyphen at the end of the line	
All sentences start and finish on the same page	
Text broken into short chunks	
Lots of white space around text	
Line length short – across A4 only	
Bullet points and fact boxes used	
Clear headings	
Addresses written as they appear on an envelope	
Layout consistent throughout and for future documents	
Images used to support text	
A3 used if document has lots of pictures	

Information compiled from:
- MENCAP (2002): Am I making myself clear? Mencap's guidelines for accessible writing
- CHANGE (2009): How to make information accessible. A guide to producing easy read. documents
- Department of Health (2010): Making written information easier to understand for people with learning disabilities. Guidance for people who commission or produce Easy Read information
- Stroke association (2012): Accessible information guidelines. Making information accessible for people with aphasia