

MENCAP STORY BOOK



mencap

The Mencap story book has been created to help people **talk about what we do** as an organisation, some helpful ways to **talk about learning disability** and also some tips on **accessible communications**.

It is important that we **communicate about our work in the same way**, it helps us **create trust** and make sure our messages and campaigns reach the **right people** so we can make the **UK the best place for people with a learning disability to live happy and healthy lives**.





WE ARE MENCAP

We want the UK to be the best place for people with a learning disability to live happy and healthy lives.

People with a learning disability want to live their lives as best they can, just like anyone else.

More than anything else, barriers in society and people's attitudes to learning disability stop this from happening.

Mencap is a partner, resource and champion for the whole learning disability community, fighting for a kinder, fairer and more inclusive society for people with a learning disability to live in.

Mencap help make the UK to be the best place for people with a learning disability to live happy and healthy lives by:

- Providing direct support to people in the UK, Northern Ireland (Mencap NI) and Wales (Mencap Cymru).
- Campaigning alongside people with a learning disability.
- Supporting people with information, advice and guidance.
- Doing research about learning disability
- Supporting people with a learning disability in their own communities to create change.

What we think is important:

- We're activists and change needs to happen.
- We celebrate difference and representation matters.
- We're an anti-racist organisation.
- We're inclusive and lead by the needs of the learning disability community, supporting individuals, communities and groups to campaign for change.
- Accessibility and co-production is at the heart of everything we do.
- Being a service provider, we have use our expert knowledge in our campaigning.



HOW WE EXPLAIN WHAT MENCAP DOES



Short:

Mencap is all about living life with a learning disability.

Medium:

Mencap is all about living life with a learning disability and we want the UK to be the best place for people with a learning disability to live happy and healthy lives.

Long:

We want the UK to be the best place for people with a learning disability to live happy and healthy lives. Mencap is a partner, resource and champion for the whole learning disability community, fighting for a kinder, fairer and more inclusive society for people with a learning disability to live in through campaigning, fundraising, providing direct services, community lead work and research.

COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

To be known as an organisation that is about living life with learning disability everything we put out into the world needs to

We should follow these 4 principles:

1. Accessible by design

As a community led organisation, everything we produce with by and for the learning disability community must be accessibility and inclusively designed.

Inclusive, accessible language and design happens from the start.

2. Show, don't tell

People with a learning disability know their lives best, not Mencap. They are the voices of learning disability, they are the people who need to have their voices heard.

People with a learning disability lead our communications.

3. Many lives, many voices

There are 1.5 million people with a learning disability and millions of family and friends. All of these lives and experiences make up the learning disability community, and are all different.

Stories from all parts of the community and our role is to create a platform for those voices.

4. Make noise

People with a learning disability are often unseen and hidden from view in culture and society. We need to make noise in all we do.

The bold, loud and impossible to ignore.

SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

We focus on the **social model of disability**, not the medical model. This is a way of viewing society, this means talking about the barriers and attitudes in society that stops a person with a learning disability from living a happy and healthy life.

This could be **stigma** from people working in the healthcare profession that reinforces **health inequalities**, lack of reasonable adjustments in the workplace, **negative and false attitudes** or **lack of accessible information**.

We want to **break societal barriers** and make the UK more inclusive and fair for people with a learning disability. To do this we need to be **consistent about how we communicate and craft our messages to the public** - using our house style, tone of voice and visual identity all the time.



WHAT IS LEARNING DISABILITY AND HOW TO TALK ABOUT IT

Living with a **learning disability is different for everyone**, with different conditions, contexts and communities across the country. A person's learning disability is unique to them, **the best person to describe their learning disability is themselves**.

There's a few ways people might describe their learning disability. It could be talking about their specific condition or diagnosis, 'I have Down Syndrome' or it could be that they use the term 'learning difficulty' or that they are part of the neurodiversity community. Or they may not describe a diagnosis at all. None of these are wrong and a learning disability is different for everyone. **No two people are the same.**

A learning disability affects the way a person learns new things throughout their life. A person with a learning disability might have some difficulty:

- understanding complicated information
- learning some skills
- looking after themselves or living alone.



Mencap's definition of learning disability:

A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life. People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complicated information and interact with other people. People are born with a learning disability.

How Mencap talk about learning disability:

We use the phrase 'people with a learning disability' or 'a person with a learning disability'. We use this over 'people with learning disabilities'. This is because a person may have trouble reading and writing, but we do not count this as two disabilities. They are the difficulties they have because of their learning disability.

THE BEST PERSON TO DESCRIBE THEIR LEARNING DISABILITY IS THEMSELVES



Ishmail– Parliamentary and Government engagement officer at Mencap defines a learning disability as:

“My understanding about Learning Disability is that people need accessible information and simple language. People with LD need a bit more extra time to go through and understand everyday tasks. These can be things to do with work and general life. Each person with a learning disability has their own individual needs. People get confused between learning disability and learning difficulty. It’s important for people to understand the difference.”



Harry – Digital Accessibility Officer at Mencap defines a learning disability as:

“A learning Disability means someone that finds it hard to learn things quickly but with the right support they will always succeed in their dreams. People with a learning disability face many barriers in life, for example not receiving the right reasonable adjustments like easy read. having a job and difficulty finding friendship and relationships. Mencap for over 75 years has been campaigning for change to break down these barriers but most of these barriers are still here today but with the big plan we are going to be brave to make these changes a reality.”



Amy – Digital Assistant at Mencap defines a learning disability as:

“I think having a learning disability makes you have challenges in your life with learning new things and managing to be independent and live in the community where you are. Sometimes you need support with money, forms and social company.”

ACCESSIBILITY

Making your writing easy to understand

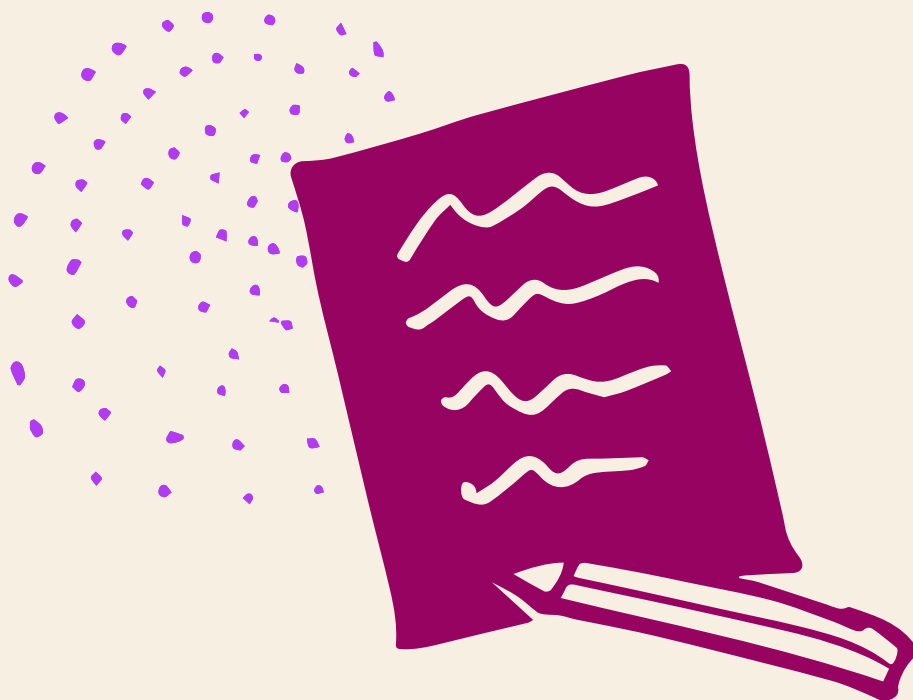
At Mencap, accessibility is at the heart of everything we do. This includes our writing.

We need what we are saying to be clear and simple to understand. That means using plain language and not jargon.



Plain language isn't about under valuing your writing. It's making sure it's **easy to understand for the largest number of people**.

It also includes the **structure of the text and the way you organise and present your content**. Accessible writing is different to easy read. Easy Read is generally far less complex than plain language text, and usually includes simple images. Best practice for Easy Read means all text should be checked for accessibility by someone with a learning disability.



Top tips for writing in an accessible way

- Use short sentences.
- Write clearly and in plain language.
- Never use a longer word when a shorter word will do. You can check an online dictionary for easy meanings of words.
- Avoid repeating yourself.
- Use bullet points and headers to make your writing more digestible.
- Use the FS Mencap font and a minimum point size of 11
- Use images that go well with what you are saying to make it easier to understand, as well as strengthen the message.
- Do not shorten words, always use the full word. This includes not using hyphens.
- Don't assume that your audience has any knowledge on Mencap or learning disability.
- Use a spellcheck on your document to find errors.
- If possible, ask a person with a learning disability to check your work for their view on how accessible the writing is.

Easy read

We often write documents specifically for people with a learning disability. These are called ‘easy read’ documents. Easy read is a way of making written information easier to understand and **goes beyond plain language**.

Easy read documents usually combine **short, jargon-free sentences with simple, clear images** to help explain the content. It is increasingly used to help the 1.5 million people who have a learning disability in the UK have access to **clear and logical information**.

Easy read is often confused with plain language or accessible writing. While both have the same aim– making information is easier for people to understand – **Easy read text is generally far less complex than plain language text**, and usually includes simple images. Mencap use Photosymbols. This is an online system that provides images to support text. If you need a log in for this, please contact Sophie Spiteri or Emma McKay.

It is often helpful to look at these different styles of writing in order of accessibility, with Easy read at one end, plain language in the middle, and standard text at the other.

Top Tips for writing in Easy read

- The standard font size should be at least 16pt.
- Photo symbols should accompany text in easy-read documents.
- Place them on the left and text on the right.
- Images should reflect the key point of the sentence.
- Sentences must be kept short and have no more than one idea per sentence.
- Abbreviations, jargon or acronyms must not be used, except when they are more recognised than the words written out in full. For example, GCSEs. Difficult words or phrases should be explained either directly after they are used or in a ‘what words mean’ section.
- Avoid using italics, BLOCK CAPITALS or underlining. They all make writing harder to read. If you want to make a point stand out, use bold. Write all numbers in figures, not in words.
- Create and check your work with someone with a learning disability
- Staff should use Make it clear as their guidance for writing in easy read - this is available on MyMencap.

Why do we use Easy read?

The right to accessible information is established in law with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Equality Act 2010, protecting disabled people from discrimination.

Accessible Information Standard

The Accessible Information Standard is a law which aims to make sure people with a disability or sensory loss are given information they can understand, and the communication support they need.

The Accessible Information Standard (AIS) was introduced by the government in 2016 to make sure that people with a disability or sensory loss are given information in a way they can understand.

It is now the law for the NHS and adult social care services to comply with AIS.

If information is not available in an easy-to-understand format, some people may struggle to make key decisions about important areas of their life. For example, in their work or when managing their health or leisure time. You can read more about the accessible information standard [here](#).

Other ways to communicate

Easy read is just one way to communicate with people with a learning disability. There are lots of ways to do this:

- video
- audio recordings
- podcasts
- online tutorials
- face to face interaction.

Communicating with someone with a learning disability

Here are some tips for when you need to speak to someone with a learning disability. It is not always the same for everyone so **always ask the person with a learning disability what they think.**

- Find a good place to communicate in, somewhere **quiet without distractions.** If you are talking to a large group be aware that some people may find this difficult.
- Ask **open questions.** These are questions that don't have a simple yes or no answer.
- **Check with the person** that you understand what they are saying, "the TV isn't working? Have I got that right?"
- If the person wants to take you to show you something, go with them.
- **Watch** the person. They may tell you things by their body language and facial expressions.
- Learn from experience. You will need to be **more observant** and don't feel awkward about asking parents/carers for their help.
- Try **drawing.** Even if your drawing is not great it might still be helpful.
- Take your time, **don't rush** your communication.
- Use **gestures and facial expressions.** If you are asking if someone is unhappy make your facial expression unhappy to reinforce what you are saying. Do your best to do this in a natural way to **avoid being patronising.**
- Be aware that some people find it easier to use **real objects** to communicate but **photos and pictures** can really help too.

HOW WE LOOK AND OUR DESIGNS

Our logo

Mencap have updated our logo. It has been redesigned to be simpler, brighter and more modern

- It does not have the strapline 'The Voice of Learning Disability'. The strapline no longer represents everything that Mencap stands for. We are more than a voice of people with a learning disability.
- We can also use the new logo as a pink speech bubble behind the word 'me'.
- The word Mencap is in one colour, to improve readability and help recognition.

If you need to use the Mencap logo for external partnerships, fundraising, any large public facing activities then please contact regional marketing managers Sophie Spiteri or Emma McKay who can advise on how our logo can be used.



For **Wales** the correct logo to use is the one below.



For **Northern Ireland** the correct logo to use is the one below.



Co-production

Wherever possible, we **work alongside people with a learning disability** to support with our design and communications work. Lots of the patterns and icons you will see across our brand work have been designed by people with a learning disability. Perhaps you are or know someone who likes making art or taking photos.

Font

Our **font is FSMencap** and we should use this wherever possible. It is accessible and has been designed to increase legibility and readability. If FSMencap is not available, use Tahoma.

Photos

Our photos need to **show what living life with a learning disability is like** and celebrate the personalities of people in our community.

- Any photos we use need to be authentic of the situation – for example it could be a happy or a sad moment. But we need to make sure we are capturing the real emotion.
- Photos are not too staged or posing.
- We have lots of photos that you can use in your work.



TOOLS TO HELP YOU

Branded templates - RightMarket

To help support with branded material, we have a design platform called Rightmarket that anyone at Mencap can use.

You can get yourself a login by clicking **here**.

RightMarket has a wide range of editable templates for posters, booklets, recruitment materials, leaflets, headed paper and business cards. You can also order printed material to be delivered to your door via the system.

We are always looking to improve the system, so if you have any requests or ideas, please contact Sophie Spiteri or Emma McKay.

Logo and assets

You can download a variety of branded assets from MyMencap. For example our email signatures, headed paper, powerpoints and our logo. If you need help with logo use contact Sophie Spiteri or Emma McKay.

Case studies and photos

We have an online database that has stories and images on that you can use. To get access please contact story telling lead, Aimee-Lee Abraham.

Easy read – making it clear guide

You can download the guide about writing easy read documents from MyMencap

Photosymbols

We use photosymbols in our easy read documents to get access please contact Sophie Spiteri or Emma McKay.

House style

You can download our house style document from MyMencap. This is a technical document for copywriters but can help with some tips on how we write certain words at Mencap.

If you have any questions about anything in the story book contact Sophie Spiteri or Emma McKay.