

Section 3

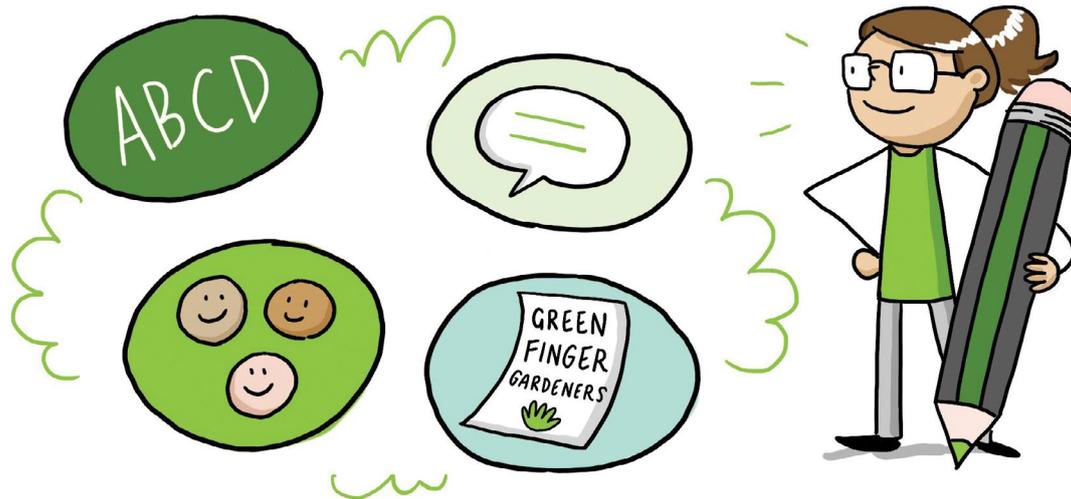
DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

ABOUT THIS SECTION

This section addresses the written aspects of inclusive communication.

It focuses on the elements to consider across the following 4 key areas when reviewing or developing written inclusive communication:

1. Language, content and style
2. Design and format
3. Diversity and inclusion
4. Wellness and reablement



DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE PERSON CENTRED WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

When developing or reviewing your written communication it is important to consider how you are going to communicate your service to existing and potential consumers. You will also need to consider how your internal forms (intake, feedback, newsletters, session timetable) are designed and how your messages are communicated.

Language, content & style

Plain language

Communication is documented in plain language. Consider the literacy level. Keep messages clear, direct and specific (less is best). Avoid the use of acronyms, complex medical terminology, and jargon (social isolation, person centred, ASM). If you do use any term that may not be clear, provide an example to show what you mean. e.g. 'We focus on your needs and wants'. Where possible translate material.

Target audience

The program's key eligibility requirements and target audience needs to be easily identifiable. Consider the words, images and format that will best engage your target audience (current & potential). The target audience should align with the eligibility criteria of the program (and subsequent funding requirements) but should also encourage consumers to contact the service provider to discuss eligibility based on their individual circumstances, providing opportunity to explore options.

Motto's and catch phrases

A well-written motto or catch phrase can quickly resonate with people and help them to feel a connection to your service. They can provide insight into your approach to service delivery and generally reflect your values, principles, mission or quality statement. Some local examples include 'Be creative, laugh with friends- live well' (Penumbra Centre), 'Encourage, Connect, Inspire' (Interchange Outer East).

Explaining your service or activity

Clearly name the service or activity you are offering. For example:

- Active exercise class
- Social outing group. e.g. visit to the maritime museum
- Advice about food and cooking for one

Avoid names or acronyms that may be unfamiliar to consumers. e.g. PAG. Briefly describe the service and the benefits of attending the service. e.g. occupational therapy – supporting you to live independently at home and in the community.

15. <https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>

16. <http://www.nova.edu/gsc/forms/mi-techniques-skills.pdf>

Using symbols, acknowledgments and flags

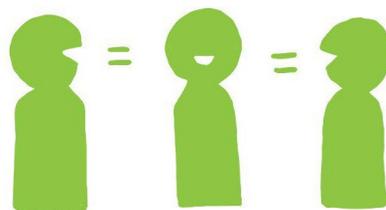
Displaying symbols and written acknowledgements is a great way for service providers to demonstrate their commitment to providing a safe and inclusive environment. It is vital that before you use these flags or symbols, that staff understand why you are displaying them and how to respond if questioned by clients. If you are displaying the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Rainbow or Transgender flags in your communication it is recommended that it is accompanied with some text.

For example: 'We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land and actively invite and welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in our service' or stating 'Our service celebrates diversity, is committed to having a safe and inclusive service and welcomes people who are same-sex attracted and gender diverse/ from the LGBTIQ community'. Displaying flags of different countries is a good way to demonstrate you are trying to reach particular communities, but a statement supporting the use of the flag is recommended. Display the interpreter symbol and ensure that staff understand how to support clients to access interpreting services.

WE ACTIVELY INVITE
ABORIGINAL
& TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER PEOPLE
TO participate...



OUR SERVICE
celebrates
DIVERSITY...



INTERPRETER

Recommended resources

- Guidelines for producing readable text
<http://www.visionaustralia.org/business-and-professionals/print-accessibility-services>
<http://www.visionaustralia.org/business-and-professionals/print-accessibility-services/inclusive-communication-strategies>
- Access Easy English- interprets documents into everyday language, supported with images
<http://accesseasyenglish.com.au/>
- Scope- Accessible information and Easy English
<http://www.scopeaust.org.au/service/accessible-information/>
- Web content accessibility guidelines
<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>
<http://www.mayer-johnson.com/what-is-boardmaker/>
- Victorian Government Accessible Communication Guidelines
http://healthissuescentre.org.au/images/uploads/resources/Accessible_Communication_Guidelines_January_2014.pdf
- Banyule City Council- Inclusive Language Guide
<https://www.banyule.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/.../inclusivelanguagefinal.pdf>
- Tasmanian Department of Health
<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/documentcentre/Documents/Guidelines-for-Inclusive-Language.pdf>

Design and format

Fonts, colour and communication platforms

Use a plain font with a reputation for readability e.g. arial or calibri. Minimise the use of italics, capitals, bolding and underlining. Text size should be between 10 -12 points depending on the document and communication. If you are promoting your communication towards an older demographic you may consider using 12 point font.

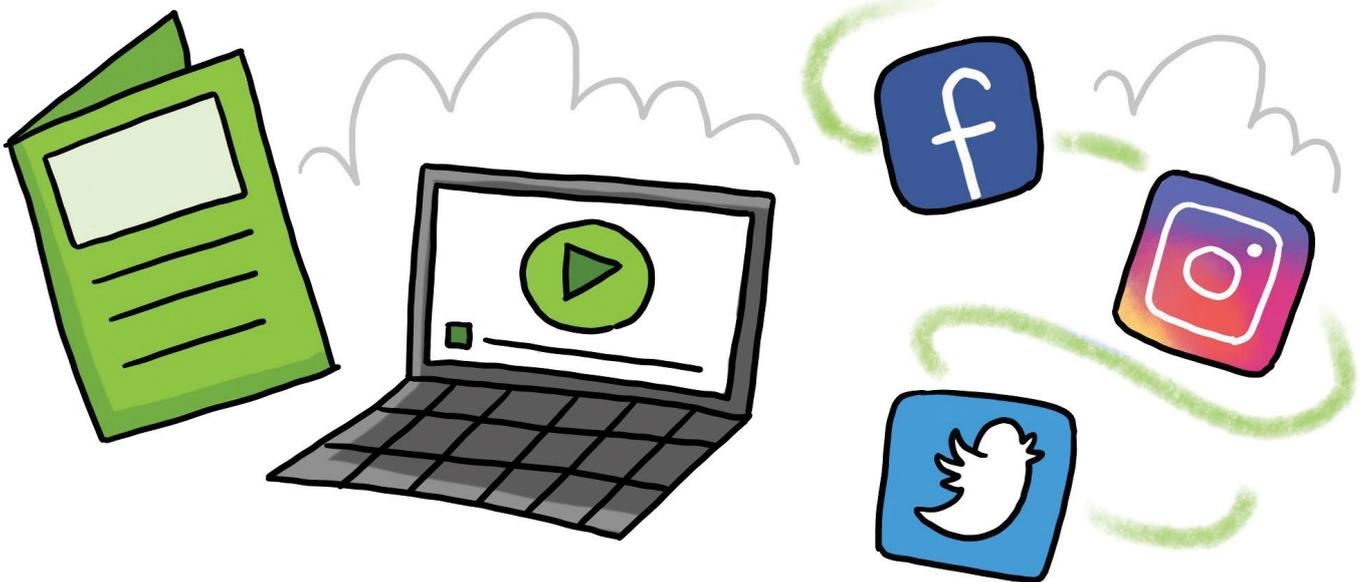
Use a background colour that does not conflict with the text such as a dark print on a light background. Do not put too much information on each page, use white space to draw the reader to the key messages, leave wide margins, space between paragraphs, and keep text to a minimum. Use columns and images to break up text.

Communication platforms may include newsletters, brochures, information booklets and packages, posters, flyers, media (radio or newsprint), websites, YouTube videos, CD/DVD, audio scripts and social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Consider the use of

alternative communication aids (communication boards, large print, braille, pictograms and apps). The approach to communication is representative of the way the target audience accesses information.

Images reflect the consumers, service and the community

Where possible use images of consumers using your service, with permission. Reflect the diversity of your local area in images you use. For example: people who are transgender, in a same-sex relationship, have a disability or are from a CALD community. People from diverse communities need to be visible, but ensure your content supports your images. Use images that are empowering and positive e.g. 'doing with, not for' or people actively involved in activities. Targeted communication aimed at specific diversity groups is a great way to engage with a particular group or community, but ensure there is something that speaks to all your potential consumers.



Diversity and inclusion

Communication should be explicitly welcoming of diversity broadly, as well as targeting specific diversity groups as appropriate. e.g. people who identify as LGBTIQ, local CALD groups, Aboriginal communities. It is important to consider any way in which communication may unintentionally marginalise or exclude a particular diversity group. Before stating that: 'we offer a culturally appropriate and safe service for any diversity group' it is vital that your organisation can deliver on this and that the message is not tokenistic.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

It is important to recognise the diversity that exists within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Individuals have diverse backgrounds, personal characteristics, preferences, experiences and cultures. There are however, some overarching considerations that need to be followed when developing communication that refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Always capitalise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Aboriginal, Indigenous and do not use abbreviations such as ATSI. The term Indigenous, is often used to describe Indigenous people worldwide and in Australia many Aboriginal people prefer that it is not used. If you can demonstrate that your organisation has a good relationship with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; organisations and/or clients you may want to highlight this in your communication, along with your commitment to delivering a service that is cultural appropriate and inclusive. Referencing and acknowledging the local Aboriginal custodians where the services are based sends a positive message to the community.

Financial and social situations

Clearly state how much your services costs. If there is financial support or waivers available to people who cannot afford the service state this. For example, 'financial support to access our services is available where needed, discuss this confidentially with a member of our team.' Mentioning you have a fees policy in your communication won't mean anything to clients, explain clearly and plainly how you can assist them if they are experiencing financial difficulty. It is important that staff understand the organisations fees policy and support available and apply it consistently so clients are not excluded from receiving a service.

Gender

Gender stereotypes and gendered communication can create issues and alienate clients. Gender-neutral language should be used where possible. There may be specific reasons to offer gender-based services, but this should be justified and not based on perceptions that

an activity is appropriate or appealing to men/women. Promoting gender-based activities can also appear exclusionary to people who identify as gender diverse and gender non-binary.

People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities

Communication should demonstrate how the service is appropriate and welcoming for CALD communities or specific language groups. If there are particular communities you wish to target your communication to, consider what is culturally appropriate and appealing for these communities. If you have bi-lingual staff or volunteers reference this along with the languages they speak in your communication material. If your service has good engagement with CALD participants, promote this in your communication along with why your service is able to build good relationships with CALD communities. Demonstrate how your service or activities appeal to people regardless of culture or language and mention cultural diversity in positive terms. You may want to use case studies that demonstrate how your service is culturally mixed and inclusive as a good way to engage with potential clients.

People living with dementia

Avoid using language with negative connotations, as an alternative use empowering language. The use of words such as 'suffering, debilitating, afflicted, demented or exhausting' is not appropriate. Instead use phrases such as 'lives with dementia', 'symptoms of dementia', 'a diagnosis of dementia'. Using the term dementia in your communication materials may alienate potential clients and carers. Consider if it is appropriate and necessary to use the term. There are some CALD communities where there is not an appropriate translation for dementia or there is little understanding of dementia and stigma within the community.

People with a disability

The social model of disability acknowledges that it is the way society is constructed that excludes and is disabling, not individual impairments. This is true in the way we build and design our communities, but also in the attitudes society has towards people with different impairments and the language used to discuss disability. Focus on language that is respectful and enabling and does not define the person by their disability. Consider if it is necessary to mention disability and if it is, how you can structure your communication so it is empowering and enabling. e.g. 'person with a physical disability' or 'person experiencing memory loss'. Print and online communications need to take into account alternate format materials, such as braille, large print, audio or

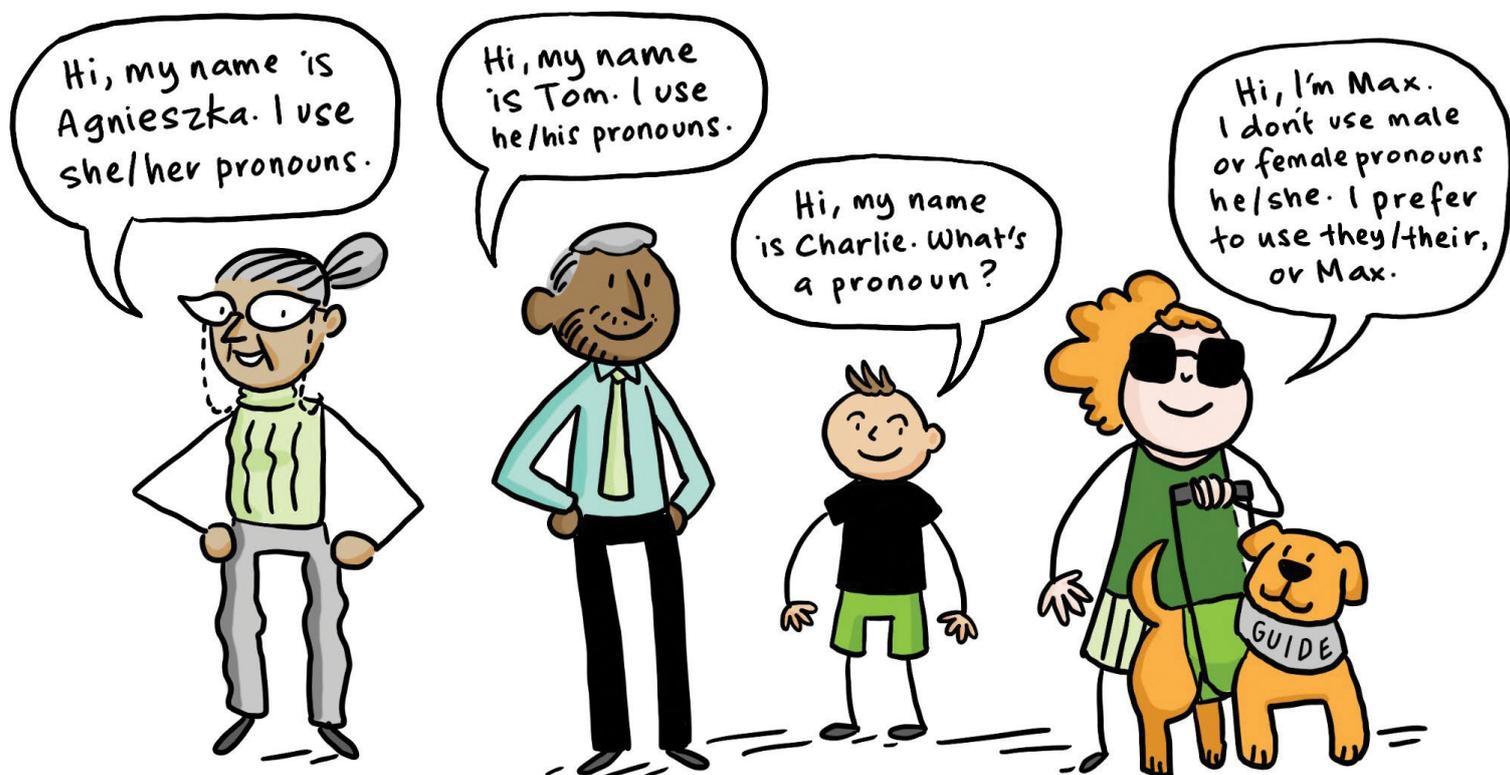
electronic text. Documents loaded on to your website need to be accessible in regards to their style, content and format, but also for document reading technology.

People who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ)

Avoid using language that is heterosexist or only acknowledges opposite sex relationships. Focusing on strict 'gendered' groups may also unintentionally exclude people and send a message that people who are gender diverse are not welcome. If using the LGBTIQ acronym make sure you spell out Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer first. You may choose not to use the acronym and prefer to use language such as same-sex attracted and gender diverse. It is good to overtly state that you welcome and encourage LGBTIQ people to use your services, but it is important that clients will receive appropriate and supportive services if they attend. If you promote an LGBTIQ inclusive service, be sure you can deliver it. Consider how can you demonstrate your commitment and show the community your service is safe. Attending pride events, developing policies, consulting with LGBTIQ community/clients and other similar activities are all potential ways to demonstrate an inclusive service.

Older people

Be aware of underlying ageist attitudes that may unintentionally marginalise people. Rather than using language such as: frail, with limited mobility or socially isolated, which focus on negative aspects, turn the language around to focus on how your service can support people to maintain or improve their mobility, build social connections or friends and focus on positive aspects of their lives.



Wellness and Reablement

The Commonwealth Home Support Program is underpinned by a 'wellness approach', which focuses on maximising a client's independence. Being person centred or taking a wellness approach means putting the person at the centre of the care, recognising that people have their own individual needs, and responding accordingly. Use positive words, phrases or visuals that are enabling and promote wellness, independence and connection to others. Use words or phrases that motivate people to think about 'what is possible'. e.g. 'the support we offer builds on what you can do or want to do'.

People's values are respected

Understanding people's values, means getting to know people, their hopes, preferences, priorities and aspirations. It demonstrates that we are interested in who they are and how they wish to live their life e.g. 'We will work with you and take into account what is important to you'.

Use words that are affirming: 'We listen; we value your life story and experiences'.

Building capacity

We all have strengths and capabilities even if we are not able to immediately recognise them. Service providers that use a strength-based approach operate with the premise that people have the ability to learn, grow and develop, regardless of their circumstances. Communication might describe how you help people to build their capacity to improve or retain the things that are important to them.

For example:

'We help you to develop the confidence and skills to do the things you want'

'We help you do things that you are able to do so you can remain independent'

'We work with you to build on what you can do'

'We help people to live well'

Choice

Facilitating choice is a key principle of a person centred or strength based approach. This includes empowering people with information and strategies and taking into account a person's right to make their own decisions. Communication might describe how you enable choice for clients, their scope of involvement and the degree to which choice is exercised.

For example:

'We will keep you informed about things that affect your care'; 'we will work with you to consider options that work for you'

Autonomy

Maintaining power, being in control of decisions or having the personal freedom to self-determine is innate in all of us. Communication should describe how service providers support a person's independence, irrespective of how each person defines independence. Use language that empowers people.

For example:

'We listen to you, you decide what's important'

'You are at the centre of all decisions that affect your care'

'We value your rights and understand that your independence is important'

Planning

'(Care) planning is the ongoing process through which staff and clients work together to collaboratively set goals, establish priorities and develop strategies to achieve positive and meaningful outcomes for clients'.³⁶ Communication might describe how you support clients to develop a plan and the benefits of this approach. The idea of developing 'goals' may be daunting for some people, so think carefully about how you describe these.

For example:

'We will work with you to make a plan about how we can work together to achieve the changes you want to make'

'We will work together to develop a plan that addresses what is important to you, your likes, needs and preferences'

Planning also includes the monitoring and review of plans.

For example:

'We will maintain regular contact with you to understand whether the service is meeting your needs.'

'We will work with you to adjust your plan as your circumstances, needs and priorities change'

Working together

Use words, phrases and visuals that describe the extent to which people (including clients, family, friends or other service providers) are involved in the care process and how this partnership approach will shape the way services are planned and delivered.

For example:

'We will work with you and the people important to you to deliver services that reflect your interests, needs and preferences'

'We help you to stay in touch or reconnect with people, places or things you want or need to do'

If you work closely with other program areas or service providers, you might consider including this information in your communication to demonstrate your collaborative approach to care.

Flexible and responsive

Flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability are traits that most people value. Service providers may express their level of flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability in communication.

For example:

'providing personalised responses', 'organising service around the person', 'focusing on the individual', 'providing unique support responses', 'tailoring to the individual', 'working with you in a way that best meets your needs', 'being responsive to changing needs, circumstances and preferences'

