



Care Inspectorate written materials – style guide

Report to: Board

Date: 28 September 2017

Report by: Rami Okasha, Executive Director of Strategy and Improvement

Report No: B-24-2017

Agenda Item: 21

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide a copy of the Care Inspectorate's written style guide and provide some background context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board:

1. Notes and agrees the style guide.

Consultation Log

Who	Comment	Response	Changes Made as a Result/Action
Senior Management	ET		
Legal Services			
Corporate and Customer Services Directorate			
Committee Consultation (where appropriate)			
Partnership Forum Consultation (where appropriate)			
Equality Impact Assessment			
Confirm that Involvement and Equalities Team have been informed	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
EIA Carried Out	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
If yes, please attach the accompanying EIA and appendix and briefly outline the equality and diversity implications of this policy.			
If no, you are confirming that this report has been classified as an operational report and not a new policy or change to an existing policy (guidance, practice or procedure)	Name: Position: Executive Director of Strategy and Improvement		
Authorised by Director	Name: R Okasha	Date: 30 August 2017	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Care Inspectorate produces tens of thousands of written reports, policy documents, practice guidance documents and other publications each year. These are written by a wide range of authors.

It is important to ensure that these publications are produced to a high standard, both in terms of the evidence behind them and the manner in which they are written and produced. To aid this, many style guides are available which can support consistency of approach. Traditionally the most widely-used style guides have been published by national newspapers. These style guides provide advice on tone and language, structure and grammar, and style and convention. Like many public sector organisations, the Care Inspectorate adopts the style guide published by the Guardian newspaper.

In addition to this, many organisations supplement standard style guides with an in-house style guide, which clarifies the words and phrases most often used with that organisation.

2.0 PLAIN ENGLISH

The Care Inspectorate is a corporate member of the Plain English Campaign, which exists to ensure that people can have access to clear and concise information which is not misleading. The Care Inspectorate supports its principles and all of its writing should be easy to read and understand. The Care Inspectorate has trained relevant staff in applying Plain English principles.

Using Plain English is particularly important because many people use our printed materials to make important decisions about their care. If the Care Inspectorate is not clear in its language, this can have a significant impact for people. While each publication and written document has its own intended audience, the Care Inspectorate seeks to ensure that public-facing documents, used by people experiencing care, are the most easy to understand.

3.0 EMPOWERING PEOPLE THROUGH LANGUAGE

In addition to making sure language is simple to understand, it is important to recognise that the words people use can have powerful effects on how they think about ideas and other people. The Care Inspectorate seeks to ensure that the language it uses helps to empower people that it works with. This means avoiding language which disempowers people experiencing care (for example, by categorising them as “patients” or “service users”), instead recognising that people’s personal identity that is not solely shaped by their relationship to a care service.

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Care Inspectorate language should not make judgements which do not reflect how people live their lives or how people perceive themselves. For example, writers should not assume that someone “suffers” from a condition because they have a specific diagnosis, and instead use phrases like “people living with [a specific condition]”.

The Care Inspectorate recognises the pioneering work of many disabled rights” activists who have challenged phrases which are often inaccurate and frequently offensive. Language which empowers people and reflects their independence and personhood is important in establishing positive values which underpin respect and compassion in care. For example, the Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project has published widely-cited guidelines on dementia and language, noting that “the language we use to talk about dementia influences how people with dementia are viewed and also how they feel about themselves”. The same is true for many other people experiencing care.

For some people with a specific diagnosis, positive use of language can have an important effect on their experiences and outcomes. The Care Inspectorate is currently examining the potential to undertake specific improvement support advice about dementia and communication in care.

When considering language, it is also important to think about organisational equality duties. Language which is gender-neutral, and which does not make other assumptions about people with protected characteristics, can help us in the statutory responsibility we have to “foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it”.

The Care Inspectorate translates written materials on request to a wide variety of languages and alternative formats. We are a member of the Happy to Translate scheme.

4.0 ACCURACY, CREDIBILITY AND CONSISTENCY

In addition to writing in an empowering and modern way, the Care Inspectorate seeks to be authoritative in the work it produces. One way to be authoritative is to be accurate in written materials and consistent in the way language, grammar and punctuation is used, particularly in areas widely held to be a matter of style and where a number of different approaches may be seen as correct. This helps to lend credibility to the messages the Care Inspectorate is conveying.

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5.0 CARE INSPECTORATE GUIDANCE

In order to support the matters above, the Care Inspectorate has produced short guidance for staff. This style guide is designed to address some of the most common issues needed to promote Plain English, empower the people about and for whom the Care Inspectorate is writing, and to ensure consistent and accurate written communication. The first version was issued to staff in 2016, along with a programme of staff development in effective writing. The 2017 version is attached at Appendix 1.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The existing communications budget provides sufficient resources to fund the production of the guide, obtain specialist staff training in Plain English, and delivery staff development opportunities to all staff.

7.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPLICATIONS

Ensuring we use clear, accurate and consistent language helps to support our customer service strategy by improving the accessibility of our information.

8.0 BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING CARE

Using clear language helps people experiencing care understand the Care Inspectorate's findings, recommendations and advice. Using empowering language can help change attitudes and values about people who experience care. Using accurate and consistent language lends confidence and authority to the messages the Care Inspectorate is conveying.

9.0 CONCLUSION

The Board is asked to note and approve this report and appendix.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - How We Write, 2017

Version: 1.0	Status: <i>Final</i>	Date: 30/08/17
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