

## Pilot Project: Easy Read Clinic Appointment Letters: experience of patients and psychiatrists

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**Aim:** The aim of this project was 1) improve communication with patients and the carers by sharing information with them in an accessible format (2) Ascertain the views and experience of people with intellectual disability and psychiatrists about the use of easy read letters.

**Background** Writing letters directly to patients is in keeping with Good Medical Practice which states: 'You must give patients the information they want or need to know in a way they can understand'. The NHS Constitution also states that patients' have the right to be kept informed about their treatment. The Academy of Royal Colleges has issued guidance for clinicians when writing to patients which states, clinicians should write to patients directly using understandable terminology rather than complex medical jargon. Previous studies have shown that patients with intellectual disability prefer separate letters in a simple understandable language.

**Methods:** A standard easy read clinic letter template was co-designed for this project to be used by psychiatrists after review of patients. Pictures were incorporated into the questionnaire to facilitate understanding. These easy read letters were given by the psychiatrists to patients/carers after the reviewing them in clinics or home visits. A second easy form was designed to ascertain the views and experience of patients and carers about receiving clinic letters information in an easy read format. Feedback was also obtained from psychiatrists regarding their experience of giving letters in an easy read format. This template did not replace the routine correspondence send to GPs .

**Results:** The easy read letter was given to 100 patients and feedback received from all of them. All patients (100%) found the template useful and helpful and there was no adverse feedback from any patient. Some of the comments about why the patients found the easy read helpful were as follows: good reminder on how the appointment went, helps staff supporting patients understand what happened in the appointment, very helpful as it is easier to know the problem and plan accordingly, clear and concise information, good explanation, easy to read, easy to understand by looking at pictures, it breaks down the health headings, easy format and pictures, it shows the different things that were discussed, new layout very helpful, ensures we discuss all areas, useful for service users who cannot read as pictures would improve understanding, don't forget.....etc. All 9 psychiatrists who participated in the project were of the view that giving easy read letters to patients was beneficial for them and would aid their understanding. All of them were of the unanimous opinion that this needed to be embedded in routine clinical practise and were positive about their experience.

**Conclusions** This easy read template improves patients' understanding and participation in the clinic review. This contributes to greater patient satisfaction. As Specialist Learning Disability services, we need to ensure that information is imparted to the patients and the carers in an accessible manner. An easy read template should be incorporated in the routine clinic practice in alignment with the guidelines from the Academy of Royal Colleges.

**References:**

- <https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/goodmedical-practice>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/the-nhs-constitution-for-england>
- <https://www.rcsed.ac.uk/media/416985/aomrc-guidelines-for-writing-letters-to-patients-final.pdf>
- Copying Clinical Letters to Patients: A view of patients with learning disabilities and their carers. British Journal of Developmental Disabilities(2007). Sawhney,I.,Tajer,A., & Morgan, J., Jan 2007

*Some comments from the patients and/or carers:*

- very helpful, good reminder on how the appointment went
- helps staff supporting what happened in the appointment
- she found the letter helpful and the doctor did a good job
  - clear and concise information
    - good explanation
    - easy to read
  - good, covered all topics.
- beneficial, it made service user concentrate
- Easy to understand because of graphic images,
  - Helpful because it is explanatory
  - Helpful because it is easy to read
  - Easier to understand with pictures
- It breaks down the health headings, easy format and pictures
  - It shows the different things that were discussed
  - New layout very helpful, ensures we discuss all areas
- Very helpful as it is easier to know the problem and plan accordingly
  - Very helpful, information actioned straight away
- Helpful, gives an instant update rather than waiting for formal outcome letters
  - Very beneficial, easy read and actions straight away
    - Made me happy
    - Accurate record of things discussed at appointment
- Useful for service users who cannot read as pictures would improve understanding
  - Helps me remember

### Appointment Outcome Letter

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Clinic Date:</b>	<b>Today we discussed...</b>
	<b>My Mental Health</b>
	<b>My Physical Health</b>
	<b>My Current Medication</b>
	<b>Reported Side Effects</b>
	<b>Any Benefits</b>
	<b>Change of Medication</b>

	<b>Epilepsy</b>
	<b>Risk to Self</b>
	<b>Risk to Others</b>
	<b>Vulnerability</b>
	<b>Challenging Behaviour</b>
	<b>Activities</b>
	<b>Other</b>
	<b>Plan</b>
	<b>Your Doctor Today: Dr Inder Sawhney</b>

**Is this easy-read appointment outcome letter helpful?**



**If you found this letter helpful, please say why:**

**If you didn't find this letter helpful, please say why:**

