

# The Right to Accessible Information

An easy read guide on YOUR right to have information that YOU understand



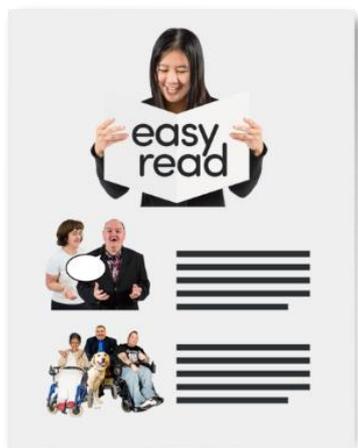
This Easy Read report was checked by Kirklees Involvement Network.

The accessible information campaign group made up of self-advocates from across the country helped to produce this booklet.

April 2021



# What is in this guide?



**This guide is about the right to accessible information.**

This means that you can get information in a way that you can understand, for example easy read, bigger print, pictures, symbols, or audio.



This guide will give you information about the different laws that mean that you have a right to accessible information.



This guide also has stories from people's lives to explain how the right to accessible information works.



The rights outlined in this guide apply to people living in the UK; England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

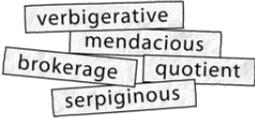


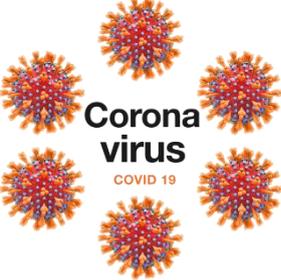
We want to say thank you to members of the UK wide accessible information campaign group for telling us their stories.

We have used these stories in this guide.

# Glossary (difficult words)

If you come across a word that is hard to understand and it is in the colour **red**, you can read the meaning of the word here.

|   |                                 |  |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
|                          | <p><b>Adult social care</b></p> | <p>Adult social care is the support provided to some adults with physical or learning disabilities or difficulties, autism, and/or physical or mental health issues.</p> |
|                          | <p><b>Correspondence</b></p>    | <p>Correspondence is the way that we communicate with each other in writing or pictures. Correspondence can be letters, emails, photos or symbols and so on.</p>         |
|                         | <p><b>Funded</b></p>            | <p>Funded means the way that something is paid for. If you receive support it might be funded by the NHS or your <b>local authority</b>.</p>                             |
|                        | <p><b>Instructions</b></p>      | <p>Instructions tell us what to do.</p>  |
|  <p><b>Involve</b></p> | <p><b>Involvement</b></p>       | <p>Involvement means to take part in something. You might be involved in planning how you get extra support or care.</p>   |
|                        | <p><b>Jargon</b></p>            | <p>Jargon means difficult words that are used by different groups of people that people outside of that group might find hard to understand.</p>                         |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|                  | <p><b>Local Authority</b></p>                    | <p>A local authority is an organisation in charge of <b>public services</b> in an area. Your council is a local authority.</p>  |
|                 | <p><b>Lockdown, Coronavirus and Covid-19</b></p> | <p>In 2020 a virus called Coronavirus or Covid-19 spread across the world, including the UK. Lots of actions have been taken to help stop the virus including making it the law that people have to stay at home and closing lots of places like shops and day centres.</p> |
|  <p>Private</p> | <p><b>Private</b></p>                            | <p>Private means information that is not available to everyone. You have a right to a private life; you do not have to tell everyone everything about your life.</p>  |
|                | <p><b>Public Services</b></p>                    | <p>Public services are organisations that serve the public and are usually <b>funded</b> by the government. The NHS, local authorities, police, public schools, fire brigade are examples of public services.</p>   |
|               | <p><b>Reasonable adjustments</b></p>             | <p>Reasonable adjustments are changes made to something to make it more accessible to everyone. Providing ramp access into a shop with stairs might be a reasonable adjustment for someone who uses a wheelchair.</p>   |
|               | <p><b>Sex and gender</b></p>                     | <p>Your sex is whether you are a man or a woman. Gender is what you describe yourself as. For example, your gender might be male, female, non-binary or transgender.</p>  |
|               | <p><b>Wellbeing</b></p>                          | <p>Wellbeing is your physical and mental health and happiness. If something makes you upset or ill, it might affect your wellbeing.</p>   |

# What is the right to accessible information?



What makes information accessible is different for everyone. there is no one size fits all as people often have different needs.

Your right to accessible information means that you should be able to get information in a way that is best for you and you can easily understand.



You should be supported to access the information you need. Public officials and public bodies should communicate with you in a way that you understand.

Public bodies are **public services** like the police, the NHS, social services and **local authorities**.

# What does the law say?



This guide tells you about 4 different laws that protect and support your right to accessible information.

- **The Human Rights Act**
- **The Equality Act**
- **Accessible Information Standard**
- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**

# The Human Rights Act



The Human Rights Act has a list of 16 human rights that belong to everyone in the UK.

There is not a right called the “right to accessible information” in the Human Rights Act.

You can read our longer Easy Read Guide to the Human Rights Act [here](#).

The right to accessible information is protected by other rights in the Act, such as the right to **private** and family life and the right to be free from discrimination.



**Public services** like the NHS, care providers and social services have to make sure your human rights are protected and respected.

The Human Rights Act says that you have a right to family life, home and **correspondence**.



The right to **private** and family life protects:

- your mental and physical **wellbeing**
- being able to make your own decisions
- being able to take part in your community



Having information about **public services** and what they offer is important so that you can enjoy your rights in the Human Rights Act the same as everybody else.



The right to be free from discrimination means that you should be able to enjoy all of your rights in the Human Rights Act the same as everybody else.

This means you should not be treated worse than other people because you are disabled or for other reasons.

It also means you may need extra support so you can enjoy your human rights.

## The Equality Act



The Equality Act is there to make sure nobody gets treated worse because of their needs. These are called protected characteristics and they include disability, but also other things like your race, religion and your **sex**.

'Disability' includes people with learning disabilities and people with autism.

The Equality Act applies to England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland has a [similar equality law](#) that protects your rights there.



The Equality Act is different to The Human Rights Act as it includes businesses as well as **public services** like the council, the NHS and police.



If you have a disability, under the Equality Act, **public services**, businesses, and employers have a duty to change the way they do things to make sure that disabled people have the same rights and access as everybody else.

This is called making **reasonable adjustments**.

## The Accessible Information Standard



The Accessible Information Standard says that people who have a disability or sensory loss should get information in a way they can access and understand. For example, large print, braille, easy read or audio.



Sensory loss means when someone has lost some of their ability to see, hear, touch, smell or taste.



The Accessible Information Standard started in 2016 and was made by lots of organisations such as the NHS and Government working together. It applies to the whole of the UK. This means England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The Accessible Information Standard says that any organisation that provides NHS care or **adult social care** has to make sure that people can get information in a way they can access and understand.

## The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)



**The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)** aims to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights as people who don't have disabilities.



The UK government has made a promise under the **UNCRPD** to make information more accessible. This means that information the government publishes should be accessible.

The government should also encourage the media and websites to make online information available in accessible formats.

## Stories



The stories below are real stories from people's lives. The stories explain how the right to accessible information is protected in different ways, depending on the situation.

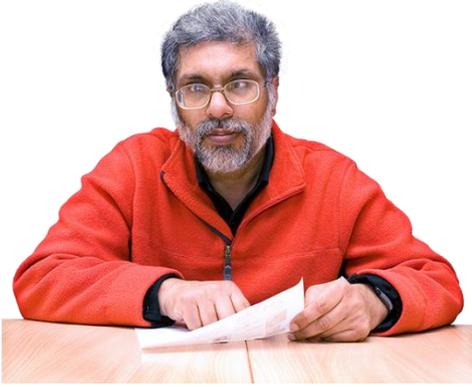
## Ravi's Story



Ravi was sent a **Covid-19** home test. The test **instructions** were difficult to understand.



Ravi phoned 111 to ask for an easy read instruction sheet. Ravi was told that this was not possible.



This means that Ravi could not take the **Covid-19** test at home. Ravi cannot go to a drive-in centre where a qualified person could do nose and mouth swabs.

Not being able to read the **instructions** and complete the test could harm Ravi's **wellbeing**, particularly his physical health.



Being able to complete the test is important for Ravi to know whether he is ill with **Covid-19**.



As Ravi doesn't have information on the **Covid-19** test in a way that he can understand (accessible information) Ravi can't decide what to do for the best.



Your **wellbeing**, including physical health, and your right to make decisions about your own health and life is protected by the right to **private** and family life in the Human Rights Act.



If you are worried about how decisions that affect you are being made, you can talk to any person that is **involved** in making the decision about your rights.



The people **involved** in making decisions that affect you might be Social workers, Doctors, Nurses, Council Workers, Carers, Police, NHS staff, and so on.

In this situation Ravi could talk about his right to **private** and family life, which includes his **wellbeing** and being **involved** in decisions about his life and health.



Ravi could tell the staff making decisions that affect him that the Human Rights Act says they must support his right to accessible information.

The Human Rights Act also says that he should not be treated worse than someone else, but this has happened because he has not been given accessible information that he needs and has asked for.



**Accessible Information Standard**

Ravi could also say that the Accessible Information Standard says the NHS must provide this information in accessible formats.



The law says that the NHS must follow the Accessible Information Standard. If Ravi doesn't get the information in a way that he can understand, he can complain.

Ravi could tell people that are involved in making decisions that affect him that the **Human Rights Act** and the **Accessible Information Standard** says that he must be treated fairly and given information in a way that he understands.

## Carol's Story



The Government has published information on their website explaining what the rules are in lockdown. Carol finds it hard to understand these rules because of her learning disability.

If Carol is unable to read and understand the lockdown rules, it could impact her right to **private** and family life under the Human Rights Act.



If the Government has not made sure that people can understand the rules, people might not be able to decide how to act during the lockdown and how to safely be **involved** in their community.

This could impact Carol's **wellbeing**.



If Carol cannot read or understand the information, it means she is being treated worse than other people who can read and understand the information. This is discrimination.

The UK Government has also made a promise under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to make information more accessible.

Because of the **Human Rights Act**, the **Accessible Information Standard**, and **UNCRPD** Carol has rights that mean that rules from the government should be given to her in a way that she can understand.

# Margaret's Story



Margaret has been given information about an art class. Margaret does not use words to communicate, and does not understand the booklet about the art class.

Margaret likes to try things before making decisions. She would need to try the class and see if she likes it, then she could decide if she wanted to go again.



If the art class is **funded** by the government or **local authority**, the **Human Rights Act** might apply here.



Margaret not being able to decide whether to join the class because there is no accessible information could affect her right to **private** and family life.

This is because this right protects Margaret's:

- **Wellbeing**, and this situation may have negatively affected her mental health
- **Involvement** in decisions about her own life and to help her be **involved** in her community

|   |   |
|---|---|
|     | <p>Margaret does not use words to communicate, so needs extra support when making decisions in a way she understands.</p>   |
|    | <p>Margaret could ask for <b>reasonable adjustments</b> to be made, so that information about the class is given in a way that she understands. This might mean asking to watch the class before making a decision.</p>   |
|   | <p>If the arts class is being run by a private company, the <b>Equality Act</b> will apply.</p> <p>The company that is running the class would need to make <b>reasonable adjustments</b> to make sure that anyone is able to join.</p>                                       |
|  | <p>A <b>reasonable adjustment</b> could include making sure people can access information about the class in a way that they understand. It might mean giving a taster session or providing a chance to watch a class if this is needed for a person to access the class.</p> |

Margaret might be able to use the **Human Rights Act** and the **Equality Act** to tell the people running the class and her local authority that she is being treated unfairly.

# Lee's Story



Lee has been offered a new job by a private company. The company have given him an employment contract.

Lee does not understand the contract, as it is full of long words and **jargon**.



As the employment contract is with a private company, the **Equality Act** will apply.



Not having a contract he can understand means that Lee is being treated worse than someone who can understand the contract. This could stop him from taking the job. This is discrimination.

Lee's employer will need to think about **reasonable adjustments** that could be made to make sure that Lee is not being discriminated against.



Lee's employer could create a more accessible version of the contract that Lee understands.

Lee's employer could talk through the contract with Lee and help him to understand any **jargon** used.

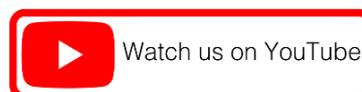
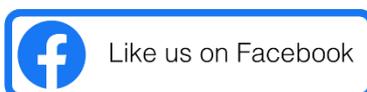
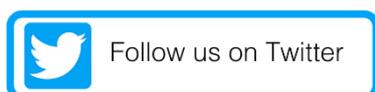
Lee could tell his employer that the **Equality Act** means that he should be given a version of the employment contract that he understands.

This booklet was produced by

## **The British Institute of Human Rights**

To find out more about your human rights and the work that we do, please visit our website:

[www.BIHR.org.uk](http://www.BIHR.org.uk)



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and

The accessible information campaign group made up of self-advocates from across the country helped to produce this booklet.

To find out more about the accessible information campaign group, please [click here](#).