



Older People: Guidelines for Information Providers

General

Information provision for older people should be based on principles of quality service delivery¹;

The diversity of the older population needs to be fully recognised – the older population is much broader than those in need of care and support services;

Information provision should reflect and promote an anti-ageist philosophy, avoid ageist assumptions and help to empower those older people who want to expand rather than limit their options;

Information providers should take note of Access to Information for All: Guidelines on Removing Barriers and Improving Access to Information for Everyone (Comhairle 2005)²;

Apply the Code of Practice on Accessibility of Services and Information provided by Public Bodies³, developed in conjunction with the Disability Act 2005, in respect of those older people who have disabilities;

Information about statutory services should be clear on which services are actually available to individuals at local level as distinct from what might be available nationally;

Older people should be consulted on an ongoing basis. This consultation should include all categories of the older population;

People involved in frontline service delivery should receive training⁴ in:

- developing an anti-ageist approach
- dealing with older people who have hearing/sight difficulties
- dealing with older people living in difficult or abusive situations.

Providing Information

Information providers have an important advocacy role in relation to older people seeking and getting information in order to ensure that they are helped and enabled to make full use of the information provided;

Pay particular attention to the needs of older people with functional impairment;

When giving information take into account that some older people may require additional time to absorb and understand the information provided;

Written and audio-visual materials should follow best practice on accessibility, legibility and literacy (taking into account the fact that problems with sight and hearing increase with age);

¹ See *Principles of Quality Customer Service for Customers and Clients of the Public Service*. www.bettergov.ie

² This provides a Checklist on how to make information accessible, under headings such as, *Information in Alternative Formats, Telephone Services, Online Information, Face-to-Face Information and Making Offices Physically Accessible*.

³ See *National Disability Authority, Code of Practice on Accessibility of Services and Information provided by Public Bodies, July 2006*.

⁴ This training may be available within the agency or accessed from other sources.

The Citizens Information Board is the national agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy to the public on the broad range of social and civil services. The Board is the support agency for the Citizens Information Service and provides the Citizens Information website.

HEAD OFFICE

7th Floor
Hume House
Ballsbridge
Dublin

t +353 1 605 9000
f +353 1 605 9099
e info@ciboard.ie
w www.citizensinformationboard.ie

Make information available in a number of ways (i.e., face-to-face, telephone, publications, radio, TV, web site) but remember that face-to-face communication is the clear preference of older people;

Back up verbal information with written documentation either in the form of a printout or a hand written note if possible. This written information should be focused and tailored to the needs of the individual and easily understandable;

Use a CHECKLIST when older people come into contact with an agency for the first time in order to ensure that they are getting any service or benefit to which they

are entitled. However, care must be taken to avoid a repetition of the CHECKLIST by several agencies;

Websites should be designed to cater for people who may have only limited experience of using the Internet and should include step by step, jargon free instructions on how to find a specific piece of information or to complete an action;

Telephone-based information services should ensure that the person seeking information can without difficulty speak to a person. Services should avoid extended digital menu options;

Information providers interacting with older people face-to-face or by telephone should:

- Give name and role
- If possible, check how the person wants to be addressed
- Allow person to speak without interruption – some older people present their query in the form of a story/narrative
- Listen attentively
- Speak clearly, slowly and in a jargon-free manner – some older people have hearing difficulties
- Allow time to deal fully with the query
- Follow-up, as far as possible, with written confirmation of the information provided.