



PiF Toolkit: creating health information that works

Full list of best practice and key steps

COLOUR CODING: *TOPIC* *BEST PRACTICE* *KEY STEP*

1. Produce accurate and reliable information

1.1 Create accurate and evidence based health information

- 1.1.a Use current, high quality research, guidelines and literature reviews.
- 1.1.b Where necessary, conduct a literature and evidence review, critically appraising any evidence you find.
- 1.1.c Keep a clear record of the evidence you have used during the entire production process to create your health information.
- 1.1.d Ensure you cover within your health information relevant issues which may cause harm to your users.
- 1.1.e Make sure you cover all possible treatment options, including doing nothing, and all relevant risks, benefits and uncertainties.
- 1.1.f Communicate benefits, risks and uncertainties in a non-judgmental and unbiased way.
- 1.1.h Include clinical experts in the development of your health information, with medical review as part of the production process.
- 1.1.i Have a system in place to allow users to feedback on potential inaccuracies in your content

1.2 Be transparent about your evidence base

- 1.2.a Communicate clearly the evidence base for your health information.
- 1.2.b Ensure your users can easily find the sources of evidence you have used.
- 1.2.c Clearly state who was involved in the production of your information, and include any conflicts of interest.
- 1.2.d Make a clear distinction between evidence-based information and other types of information, i.e. patient stories or care pathways.

1.3 Keep your health information up to date

- 1.3.a Stay up to date with developments in the evidence base.
- 1.3.b Review and update your health information regularly.
- 1.3.c Plan how the resource will be reviewed and updated, and have clear processes for the review.

- 1.3.d Maintain clear version control during editing and review.
- 1.3.e Publish the date health information was created or last reviewed and the date the health information is scheduled to be next reviewed.
- 1.3.f Link the updating of information to your dissemination activities.
- 1.3.g Withdraw/archive health information when out-of date, if you are not intending to update it.

1.4 Communicate risk clearly

- 1.4.a Make sure verbal descriptors of risk (for example rare, common) are accompanied by statistical information.
- 1.4.b Use absolute risk or number needed to treat rather than relative risk
- 1.4.c Use natural numbers rather than percentages
- 1.4.d Consider using both positive and negative framing for risk
- 1.4.e Communicate the uncertainty of data
- 1.4.f Consider using a mix of numerical and pictorial formats to communicate risk.
- 1.4.g Make risks relevant to your audience.

2 Communicate information clearly

2.1 Keep language clear and simple

- 2.1.a Use plain language and everyday words.
- 2.1.b Express numbers clearly: from one to nine as words; from 10 onwards, as numbers.
- 2.1.c Do not use jargon. Explain medical, clinical or health service terms or words.
- 2.1.d Use short sentences and paragraphs. Cut out unnecessary words.
- 2.1.e Use an active, informal tone. Talk directly to your reader. Use 'you' instead of the 'the patient'.
- 2.1.f An imperative voice should be used for instructions, and all instructions should be explained.
- 2.1.g User test your health information to ensure the language you have used is understood.

2.2 Break complex information down

- 2.2.a Present information in small chunks. Try to explore only one area in each paragraph and stick to one idea in a sentence.
- 2.2.b Include a summary of the most important points, right at the start of the information.
- 2.2.c Use visual representations where they can explain better than words, or where they aid understanding.
- 2.2.d Signpost to more in-depth information.
- 2.2.e Keep numerical information as simple as possible.
- 2.2.f When describing risk to health, use a combination of words and frequencies.

2.3 Use layout and design to aid navigation

- 2.3.a Use headings, sub headings, bullet points and colour to help users find the information they are looking for.
- 2.3.b Use a contents list where appropriate.
- 2.3.c For written information: avoid italics and capital letters; use bold text for emphasis; left justify; use a clear font and at least 12 point
- 2.3.d Use appropriate images in a meaningful way.
- 2.3.e Ensure the design is clear and visually engaging
- 2.3.f Involve experts from specialist non-clinical areas to inform the design of your resources.
- 2.3.g Ensure web-based or digital information is in an accessible format.

2.4 Ensure you have met any communication needs your audience has

- 2.4.a Identify the communication needs of your audience
- 2.4.b Ensure your information meets any required standards and follows guidelines for specific audiences

3 Ensure information has impact and relevance

3.1 Create resources with a specific purpose or objective

- 3.1.a Plan well, with clear objectives – to create information that enables users to act.
- 3.1.b Ensure your health information adds value to what already exists.
- 3.1.c User test your health information to ensure it achieves its purpose and key messages are understood.
- 3.1.d Where appropriate, ensure your resource will be supported at the point of delivery to ensure key messages are understood.

3.2 Understand and meet the needs of your users

- 3.2.a Understand the key characteristics of your audience
- 3.2.b Where appropriate, segment your audience into different target groups.
- 3.2.c Understand the journey of your users.
- 3.2.d Tailor and/or personalise information to the specific needs and circumstances of the user.
- 3.2.e Provide health information in a choice of formats, informed by user involvement.
- 3.2.g Where appropriate, provide information at a range of detail and complexity levels.

3.3 Include non-clinical information and patient experiences

- 3.3.a Include issues that affect quality of life and day-to-day living, where appropriate.
- 3.3.b Include user generated content - quotes, tips and stories where appropriate

3.4 Make information easy for users to find and access

- 3.4.a Map all potential dissemination routes at planning stage
- 3.4.f Provide health information that can be accessed in a number of different ways, informed by user involvement.

- 3.4.b Dissemination plans should consider at what point in their journey patients may need your health information.
- 3.4.c Involve 'gatekeepers' – and any other stakeholders you will need to help disseminate - in the development of your health information.
- 3.4.d Link your health information with, and signpost to, other organisations and services that are connected with your target users.
- 3.4.e For online information: include commonly used search terms; ensure information is indexed or tagged to allow search engines to find it.

4 Involve users in creating information

4.1 Involve users at every stage of your information project

- 4.1.a Plan how users will be involved throughout the creation of your health information.
- 4.1.b Involve users throughout the production process
- 4.1.c Test how well the messages in your information are understood by your target audience
- 4.1.d Design your dissemination approach with users
- 4.1.e Evaluate your resources with users

4.2 Involve a range of representative users

- 4.2.a Engage meaningfully with 'real' users and avoid tokenism.
- 4.2.b Ensure involvement includes users from all relevant groups
- 4.2.c Ensure your methods of engaging with users are appropriate for your target group
- 4.2.d Include responses from an appropriate number of people

4.3 Ensure clear communicate with the users you are involving

- 4.3.a Be clear with those you are involving on your requirements and expectations of their involvement
- 4.3.b Enable participants to share their requirements and expectations of being involved
- 4.3.b Where appropriate, keep the users you've worked with informed about the project as it develops