

**KNOWLEDGE**



# CONTENTS



- 3 | Finding what you need to know
- 4 | Your rights and entitlements
- 5 | Using your rights
- 6 | Keep it simple
- 8 | Using the information

Knowledge  
is power

# FINDING WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**When people who you don't know are trying to make decisions about your life, it's good to have as much information as possible. It's important to find out as much as you can about your situation or issue.**

When we spoke to Stanleys group members, they said they didn't understand enough about health or social care processes. They didn't know where to find good, accessible information or how to find this online.

Whether you have a meeting with professionals or you need to know more about your rights, there are ways you can find information. You don't have to be a professional to understand it, as most information should be available in Easy Read format.

**1** Ask professionals for the information - Ring the people you are going to see and ask them if they can provide you with more information. Big organisations like the local authority or Department of Work and Pensions can also provide information in an accessible and easy to understand format. They should be able to tell you where to look or send you the information via email or post.

**2**

Look online - There is lots of available information online if you know where to look for it. You can go to a search engine, such as [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk), type in the subject you want to research and add 'Easy Read.' Here you should see lots of results on the information you want in a simple, easy to understand format. Easy Read isn't just for people with learning disabilities or communication problems, it's a great way to get your head around complex, professional jargon.

**3**

Advice services - Ring an advice service like Citizens Advice. They can help you find information and may be able to send you something through the post or via email.

**4**

Ask others - Such as advocacy organisations, or speak to people who have experience of what you are going through.

**5**

Try your local library - They can help you find information if you aren't sure how.

There are lots of different ways to find things out, it may seem hard at first but the more you do it, the easier it will become.

# YOUR RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS



**Knowing your rights and what you are entitled to is the basis of being a good self advocate. Understanding your rights will also help you feel more confident to say what you want or challenge decisions.**

## **UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS**

It is impossible for everyone to know and understand every single human right that exists in our laws - there are so many of them and often they can be hard to understand. But you do have the ability to look up the information on how to use them.

Firstly, knowing who you need to contact to get that information will help. If you just look online, you may miss information that someone who has experienced the same issue could help you with. The information may also be difficult to understand. (Equally, if you just go to someone for help, you may miss something valuable that can be found online).

Usually, information about rights and the law is written in a long and complicated way. But there are lots of ways to get the information that is easier to read and understand. A good starting point would be to ask the professional involved - 'What law regulates this?' For example: Social Services would be the Care Act/ Mental Capacity Act, mental health would be the Mental Health Act and housing is the Housing Act, etc. You can then research and look for information about your rights which will help you to tackle your issue.

# USING YOUR RIGHTS



## **There is a difference between understanding your rights and using them.**

If you become aware that a professional isn't working according to the rights that apply to that service, you should make them aware of this. This can be a hard thing to do but it may help to put this in writing, or prepare in advance for any meeting.

### **EXAMPLE**

An example of this would be the right to accessible information under the Care Act. Social Services have a responsibility to give people information in a way they can understand it. That might mean Braille, audio, different languages or Easy Read and more.

This doesn't mean that they have to have all of this ready when someone asks, but they have to make an effort to provide this. Using your rights in this case makes the professional look for a way to offer you information you can understand if they have it, or look for ways to provide it if they don't.

Remember, you can speak to a professional Advocate (in your area) or the Citizens Advice Bureau if you need more information. They will be familiar with using rights when dealing with other services and can support you to do the same.

# KEEP IT SIMPLE

**Whenever you are reading about something new or something you don't understand, try to write down the most important bits that apply to you.**

It can be tricky holding onto knowledge and information, so that you can use it and understand it.

We touched briefly on 'Easy Read,' on page 9, but this is really a great way of helping you to understand the need-to-know bits of information in a way that's easy to take in.

## KNOWLEDGE IS LIKE PIZZA...

Think of knowledge like a big pizza. Can you eat all of the pizza in one go? No, we need to slice it up into sections and eat it bit by bit. This is called making something 'bitesize.'

You might want to make bitesize points about the stuff you need to know and how it applies to you. Don't write big stories, keep it short and to the point. This also helps you remember it.



**Legislation states that information needs to be accessible to people. This will apply to you, so what do you need?**

- 1.** Information to be sent to you in a way you can read and understand.
- 2.** Someone to talk it over with you.
- 3.** A clear explanation as to what it means to you and how it can affect your life.

This is the same with any information you get, break it down to the following parts:

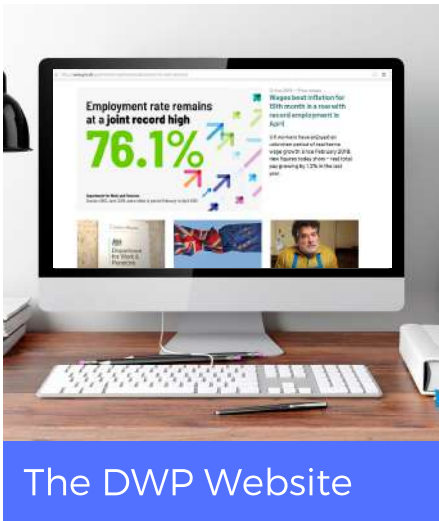
**What's important? Which bits do I need to know?**

**What do I need? Which parts of this matter to me?**

Make the information work for you. You don't need to know it all, just focus on what is important to you.

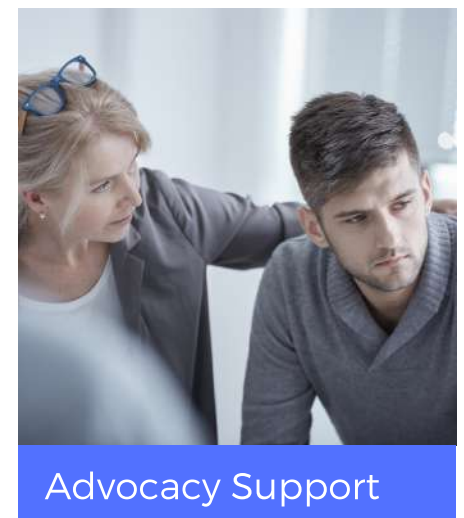
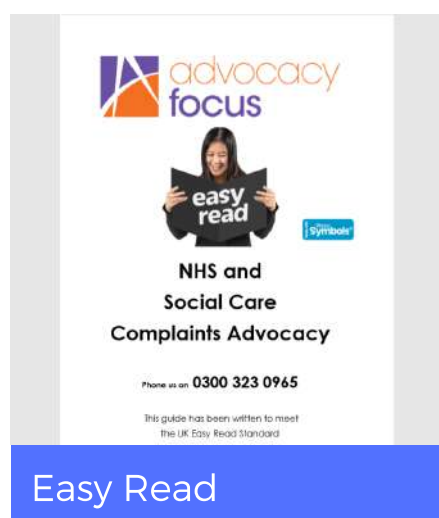
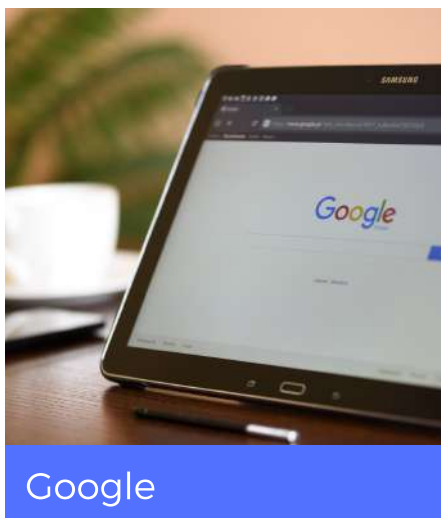
## EXAMPLE ONE

You are meeting with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) about your benefits and not being able to work. So, where would you find the information? You could try all the options below:



## EXAMPLE TWO

You want to make a complaint about treatment you received when you were in hospital, but don't know where to start. You don't feel confident complaining and have never written a letter before. You could try the options below to find out more information:



# USING THE INFORMATION

We now know that the best way to learn new information is to pick out the important parts; those bitesize pieces of information. But how do you know what to pick out or what is important? It can be hard to recognise the pieces you need to know, but we have provided an example below.

## EXAMPLE

Think about your meeting with the DWP example we used on the previous page.

- What parts of the information are important to your situation?
- What benefits do you want to about?
- What are the rules about not working – Why are you unable to find work?
- What illnesses do you have and how do these affect your life?

Breaking it down makes it useful to you, easy to understand and keeps your focus on what you are saying. Learning to do this takes time. Use the support that is available to you until you feel able to do this for yourself in future.

**Use the information to help you to self advocate. This part takes practise and you might not be able to do this the first time you try, but don't give up!**

**Remember that self advocacy isn't about doing it on your own, you can use the help of support organisations at any time. However, the more you can do for yourself the better.**

**Self advocacy is about using your knowledge, skills and confidence together to make your voice heard. This toolkit can help you but you may not get it right the first time. Each time you self advocate, you will become better and learn something new.**

