

The Widgit Symbol Custody Sheet Pilot Project



UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

Final report

Sarah Parsons and Gina Sherwood

Contact: s.j.parsons@soton.ac.uk

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Statement of authorship

The research was independently conducted and reported by Dr Sarah Parsons (Principal Investigator) and Dr Gina Sherwood (Researcher) at the University of Southampton. The funding partner organisations agreed the general focus of the pilot project and also supported initial access to research sites and participants. The conduct of the research, including choice of interviewees, lines of questioning and the analysis and interpretation of the data were decided and managed independently by the authors.

The views expressed in this report, drawing on the views expressed by participants, are the authors' own.

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Executive Summary

Background

It is estimated that 20-30% of all offenders in the UK ‘...have learning difficulties or learning disabilities [LDD] that interfere with their ability to cope within the criminal justice system; of this group 7% will have very low IQs of less than 70’ (Jacobson, 2008; p. iii). This can create particular challenges for the Criminal Justice System (CJS), for example offenders with LDD are more likely to be restrained or isolated in prison and to be excluded from programmes that may help them to address problematic behaviour (Prison Reform Trust, 2013). In addition, inmates with LDD report high levels of bullying and abuse (Talbot, 2010). Lord Bradley (2009) conducted a review of people with mental health problems or LDD in the CJS and concluded that police and custody officers lacked skills and awareness in the identification of offenders with LDD or mental health difficulties and, therefore, required more training in these areas. In addition, Lord Bradley suggested there needed to be greater consistency in the treatment of offenders with LDD within the CJS.

As one of the groups of offenders with LDD, individuals with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are often described as being particularly vulnerable within the CJS due to (for example) cognitive difficulties relating to understanding non-literal language and interpreting the intentions and behaviours of other people; sensory difficulties relating to lights, sounds and smells; social and communication difficulties which can exacerbate already tense situations; and obsessive adherence to routines or rituals which, if disrupted, may lead to aggressive behaviours (Chown, 2010; Paterson, 2008; Allen et al., 2007; 2008). There is no evidence to suggest that individuals with ASD are overrepresented within the CJS (King & Murphy, 2014; Allen et al., 2008) but they may have ‘predisposing features’ (King & Murphy, 2014; p.2717) that may lead to committing a crime, and once within the CJS, may find the context and procedures particularly difficult (Allen et al., 2007).

There are many suggestions for ways in which the CJS can improve its response to, and support for, people with LDD (e.g. Bradley, 2009; HMIP, 2014). One of the areas in which improvements could be made is in how information is provided to offenders and inmates. Talbot (2010) highlights that ‘prisons are largely paper-based regimes’ (p.36) and this means that for any offender who may have difficulties with reading and / or writing, navigating and understanding the systems of the CJS can be a significant challenge. Lord Bradley (2009) identified the first contact with the police as the ‘...point in the offender pathway [that] provides the greatest opportunity to effect change’ (p.34). Moreover, the Prison Reform Trust’s *No One Knows* report (Jacobson, 2008) highlighted that: ‘Custody officers in particular need a range of skills to identify effectively the kinds of support needed by people who come into police detention’ (p.iii). Consequently, better training of staff coupled with the provision of more appropriately tailored information for offenders at the point of risk assessment in custody could be areas where there is a possibility for implementing changes that might have a positive impact on the experiences of offenders.

The current project

A pilot project was carried out in Hampshire that aimed to change one aspect of the risk assessment process for individuals entering custody; specifically, the use of a more accessible ‘rights and entitlements’ information sheet presented in a symbol-based format (the Widgit Symbol custody sheets). As one of the first, formal, paper-based processes that individuals experience when they enter the CJS this represents an opportunity to make a positive change at one of the earliest possible occasions.

The pilot project took place in the context of a well-established partnership between Autism Hampshire and Hampshire Constabulary which has supported autism awareness training since 2008 for more than 3,000 frontline officers with a further 3,000 being trained from 2015. The

idea for the creating more accessible information for people in custody started with a custody nurse who approached Autism Hampshire and asked if the organisation could support her work around looking at developing a custody sheet to support her client base. Autism Hampshire approached Hampshire Constabulary who were supportive of taking the idea forward, and subsequently, the company Widgit Software to develop and support this work. The team at the University of Southampton was approached to conduct an independent evaluation of the implementation of the Widgit Symbol sheets in custody once the content of the sheets was mostly finalised.

The specific aims of the project were:

1. To provide an evidence-based rationale for establishing a common set of accessible information sheets that are in a standardised format and could eventually be rolled out nationwide; and
2. To find out the views of police officers' when using the materials in relation to (a) the acceptability / feasibility of using the materials in custody and (b) perceptions about how people in custody responded to the materials.

Methodology

This research took a qualitative approach to meeting these aims by (1) implementing the Widgit Symbol custody sheets in two Hampshire Constabulary custody centres for a pilot period of 4 weeks and (2) exploring the views and perceptions about the Widgit Symbol custody sheets of key stakeholders, including custody inspectors and sergeants, through individual interviews and focus groups.

Following ethical approval for the project from the University of Southampton the Widgit Symbol custody sheets were used in two custody centres for a period of 4 weeks during August-September 2014. The sheets were available across all shifts and information about the pilot communicated to all teams initially by the custody Inspectors and then through the custody Sergeants. Custody personnel were asked to use their discretion in deciding to whom to give the Widgit Symbol leaflet in addition to the 'standard' rights and entitlements leaflet that is given to all detainees entering custody (Figure 1a & b).

The sheets were not intended to be ASD specific and custody teams were briefed to give the Widgit version to '...anyone who you think may be vulnerable or have difficulties communicating and understanding'. Additional information using the symbol format was also provided in a separate folder, which contained individual laminated sheets regarding specific aspects of processes and procedures such as 'If you are ill' and 'Your DNA' (Figure 1c); three copies of the folder were given to one custody centre and one folder to the other.

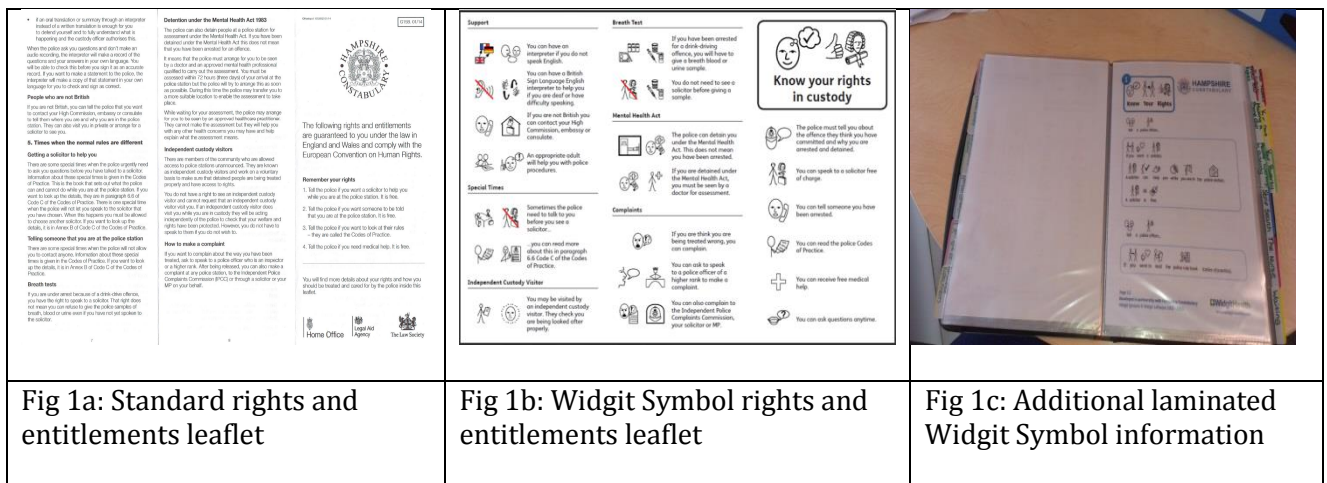


Fig 1a: Standard rights and entitlements leaflet

Fig 1b: Widgit Symbol rights and entitlements leaflet

Fig 1c: Additional laminated Widgit Symbol information

At the end of the 4-week pilot implementation, follow-up interviews were conducted with 14 custody personnel (including Inspectors and Sergeants) to seek their feedback about the Widgit Symbol sheets. In addition, a range of stakeholders both within and outside the CJS were interviewed to gauge their opinions about the Widgit Symbol custody sheets. These stakeholders included: people on the autism spectrum and their families; Appropriate Adults; and senior personnel within the CJS. No offenders were observed during the pilot implementation and so there is no direct evaluation of the use of the custody sheets with offenders within a custody context.

Participants

In total, 41 people were included in this pilot project, 29 in the form of individual interviews and 12 in small focus groups of 3 people. This number comprised 14 custody personnel involved in the 4-week pilot implementation; three parents and three young people on the autism spectrum took; one young person and two support workers from the Youth Offending Team (YOT); one parent of a child with autism, and one adult couple with learning disabilities; eight Appropriate Adults; and seven senior personnel within the CJS (three solicitors, two managers from the YOT, one manager for a magistrate's court, and one magistrate).

Findings

Overall, the main findings of the pilot implementation of the Widgit Symbol custody sheets were:

- The total number of Widgit Symbol rights and entitlements leaflets given out to people entering custody was lower (3.8%) than would be expected based on the average numbers of young and vulnerable people with LDD in the CJS (20-30%; Jacobsen, 2008);
- Of those given the sheets (n=27), eight were aged under eighteen, most (23) were male and of White British ethnic origin (25);
- Only three detainees were also shown some of the additional Widgit information sheets from the black folder, all relating to health issues;
- The most commonly mentioned reasons for giving the Widgit leaflet to those entering custody were depression and self-harm, other mental health difficulties, substance abuse, and dyslexia / difficulties reading and writing;
- Overwhelmingly, the response to the Widgit symbol sheets from custody personnel involved in the pilot, as well as other stakeholders both with and without direct experience of the CJS, was positive;
- Most interviewees thought that the sheets were a good idea because they helped to make information more accessible for those who needed this;
- Custody personnel mentioned that the use of the sheets helps to provide a more holistic, professional and robust approach to dealing with offenders while in custody;
- Many participants felt that the sheets would be useful for a wide range of people entering custody;
- More people than those giving the opposite view felt that the sheets should be given to everyone entering custody;
- Some participants (a minority), felt that the sheets could be interpreted as insulting and unhelpful by some people entering custody;
- Many participants highlighted the importance of consistency in where and how the Widgit sheets might be used, for example, in all custody centres and also across different areas of the CJS (in the courts, in prison, within the probation service);
- Helpful suggestions were provided for improving the sheets should they be used more widely in the future including more use of colour and bold type, and showing a clearer sequence of events;

- Most custody personnel felt that the best way of introducing the sheets to custody centres would be via verbal briefings and face-to-face training;
- Such training should emphasise the reasons for using Widgit symbols and the fact that a pilot implementation has already taken place, with positive outcomes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the response from custody personnel to the Widgit Symbol sheets was positive; they felt that the sheets had benefits both for the person coming into custody, as well as for the custody teams: (i) as a way of explaining jargon for anyone coming into custody (not just those with ASD) and (ii) in enabling custody personnel to provide a professional and robust service, where individual needs were appropriately taken into account. It was emphasised by some that the Widgit Symbol sheets should not be seen as a replacement for verbal interaction and support with helping the detained person to understand what was happening. Nevertheless, many respondents felt that the sheets could be used more widely within the CJS, including in court, as part of a consistent approach to the presentation of information. Although there were a few concerns expressed about giving the sheets to all those entering custody, the views of most personnel involved in the pilot were very positive. This provides a very encouraging basis for further developing and implementing this approach in the future.

This pilot project was small-scale and focused on the perceptions of a range of stakeholders both within and outside the CJS. Consequently, we do not know from this pilot project to what extent the use of the Widgit Symbol sheets made a difference to those receiving them in custody.

Further development of the sheets

1. The Widgit Symbol custody sheet development team should carefully consider the list of suggestions for improvements or changes to the current version to see which, if any, are reasonable to implement;
2. Any revised versions of the materials as a result of the feedback from this pilot implementation could be checked with the teams involved in the pilot to seek their views;

Further use of the Widgit Symbol custody sheets

3. Following any revisions to the Widgit symbol materials, a wider implementation of the sheets could be carried out across all custody centres under the jurisdiction of Hampshire Constabulary;
4. If such a wider implementation took place, custody teams should be briefed verbally via face-to-face training sessions about (i) the purpose and rationale for the sheets (ii) how the sheets should be used (with differentiation made between the initial rights and entitlements leaflet and the supplementary sheets in the folder) (iii) the evidence base so far about the use of the sheets and (iv) the importance of providing a professional service to all those entering custody;
5. During such an implementation, the use of the Widgit Symbol sheets would need to be endorsed by senior personnel within Hampshire Constabulary and the use of the sheets mandated for all persons entering custody;
6. Training or awareness raising regarding any wider implementation of the sheets should include other personnel who regularly come into contact with people detained in custody such as Appropriate Adults, social workers, health professionals, and solicitors;
7. Any wider implementation should be appropriately and independently evaluated, including, if possible, obtaining feedback (directly or via observation) of detained persons;
8. Any wider implementation should consider whether there is scope to extend the use and display of symbol-based information within other contexts of the CJS (such as information posters within custody centres; information immediately following arrest; information available in court).

Introduction

Offenders with Learning Disabilities or Difficulties (LDD) within the criminal justice system (CJS)

It is estimated that 20-30% of all offenders in the UK '...have learning difficulties or learning disabilities that interfere with their ability to cope within the criminal justice system; of this group 7% will have very low IQs of less than 70' (Jacobson, 2008; p. iii). Similar prevalence rates are reported in prison-based studies by Hayes et al (2007) and Herrington (2009). The substantial number of individuals with learning disabilities or difficulties (LDD) entering the criminal justice system (CJS) creates particular challenges which have been well-documented and recognised in recent reports. For example, the Prison Reform Trust (PRT; 2013) outlined that offenders with LDD are more likely to be restrained or isolated in prison; to be excluded from programmes that may help them to address problematic behaviour; and that many prison staff believe inmates with LDD to be more vulnerable to bullying and abuse. Actual experiences of bullying are reported from interviews with 154 prisoners identified by staff as having LDD (Talbot, 2010); around half of the interviewees said they had felt scared or had been bullied while in prison.

Lord Bradley (2009) conducted a review of people with mental health problems or LDD in the CJS and concluded that police and custody officers lacked skills and awareness in the identification of offenders with LDD or mental health difficulties and, therefore, required more training in these areas. In addition, Lord Bradley suggested there needed to be greater consistency in the treatment of offenders with LDD within the CJS. Bradley (2009) further highlighted the importance of requesting support from an Appropriate Adult for vulnerable offenders but noted that the difficulties with initial identification of difficulties in custody, coupled with limited and patchy availability of Appropriate Adults, meant that this kind of support was rarely used by custody teams.

Hellenbach (2012) also identified that there was a lack of understanding about LDD by custody staff and emphasized that awareness training for custody teams is needed alongside better and more appropriate information for offenders with LDD. Improved training for custody staff to identify the needs of offenders with LDD, and improved information provision for offenders with LDD, are interdependent processes within the CJS in the sense that both seek to ensure that offenders are better supported to understand and respond to questions asked to them (Hellenbach, 2012). Specifically, there is a need to ensure that people who may not be able to access the 'standard' information used in custody are able to understand their rights and the processes that may happen to them in order to reduce the likelihood of miscarriages of justice

(Hellenbach, 2012). On the basis of interviews with prisoners with LDD, Talbot (2010) highlights how important (and challenging) information provision is within the CJS because 'Prisons are largely paper-based regimes' (p.36). This means that for any offender who may have difficulties with reading and / or writing, navigating and understanding the systems of the CJS can be a significant challenge.

In agreement with this, Jacobson (2008) recommended that one of the ways in which policy and practices for supporting offenders with LDD can be improved is through:

'...providing more accessible written information and forms for people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties (such as dyslexia). Others can also benefit from the translation of information into 'easy read' – for example, people whose first language is not English, or who have missed out on formal education. On these grounds, it can be argued that 'easy read' should be the 'language' of choice for police forces.' (p.36).

Indeed, Lord Bradley (2009) identified the first contact with the police as the '...point in the offender pathway [that] provides the greatest opportunity to effect change' (p.34). Moreover, the Prison Reform Trust's *No One Knows* report (Jacobson, 2008) highlighted that: 'Custody officers in particular need a range of skills to identify effectively the kinds of support needed by people who come into police detention' (p.iii). Consequently, better training of staff coupled with the provision of more appropriately tailored information for offenders at the point of risk assessment in custody could be areas where there is a possibility for implementing changes that might have a positive impact on the experiences of offenders.

However, a recent report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (2014) - focusing on the period from arrest, through custody and sentencing - concluded that despite the recommendations of the Bradley report (2009), and subsequent investment by the Coalition government in liaison and diversion services at police stations and courts (PRT, 2013):

'...the needs of offenders with learning disabilities are often overlooked and, although there were some pockets of good practice and examples of practitioners 'going the extra mile' to ensure that these offenders received the support and treatment they needed, examples of good practice were the exception rather than the norm' (p.4).

Consequently, there remains a need to equip police officers with appropriate tools and understanding to enable them to identify and support people with LDD more effectively within the CJS.

This report focuses on a pilot project carried out in Hampshire that aimed to change one aspect of the risk assessment process for individuals entering custody; specifically, the use of a more accessible 'rights and entitlements' information sheet presented in a symbol-based format. As one of the first, formal, paper-based processes that individuals experience when they enter the CJS this represents an opportunity to make a positive change at one of the earliest possible occasions.

Offenders on the autism spectrum

One of the specific categories of need that is often included in descriptions of offenders with LLD is autism spectrum disorders (ASDs; APA, 2013). Using the legal definition of disability in the Equality Act (2010), previous reports about the experiences of prisoners with LDD (such as the *No One Knows* report by Jacobson, 2008) include offenders on the autism spectrum. While some offenders on the autism spectrum will also have a learning disability (Myers, 2004), others will not and have IQs in the normal to above average range (Talbot, 2010). Nevertheless, such individuals on the autism spectrum may still experience significant challenges in custody due to (for example) cognitive difficulties relating to understanding non-literal language and interpreting the intentions and behaviours of other people; sensory difficulties relating to lights, sounds and smells; social and communication difficulties which can exacerbate already tense situations; and obsessive adherence to routines or rituals which, if disrupted, may lead to aggressive behaviours (Chown, 2010; Paterson, 2008; Allen et al., 2007; 2008).

There are often negative, or sensationalised, portrayals of autism in the media (Holton et al., 2014; Huws & Jones, 2011), but claims about links between an autism spectrum diagnosis and offending behaviour are usually unsubstantiated (Chown, 2010; Dein & Woodbury-Smith, 2010; Allen et al., 2007; Howlin, 1997). Overall, there is limited research into the experiences of people with an autism spectrum diagnosis (including Asperger Syndrome (AS)¹) within the CJS, and contradictory findings reported, making it difficult to know the true state-of-play. For example, studies based on secure hospital samples in the UK (Scragg and Shah, 1994; Hare et al., 1999) suggested there was an over-representation of people with AS compared to the general population. However, more recent studies have shown that the prevalence of offenders on the autism spectrum is very low overall (Myers, 2004) and people with AS are less likely to offend than either other prisoners with different psychiatric diagnoses (Murphy, 2003) or other offenders without an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Woodbury-Smith et al., 2006).

¹ Asperger Syndrome was removed as a specific category of the pervasive developmental disorders (which includes autism) from the 5th Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM5) (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2013). However, the change does not apply retrospectively and so the label of Asperger Syndrome, as well as any literature pertaining to it, remains relevant for this report and wider discussion.

Nevertheless, when associated LDD was taken into account, Myers (2004) reported that the prevalence of offenders with autism and a learning disability was higher (compared to those with an ASD and no learning disability). In addition, Myers (2004) reported that staff felt particularly unprepared and unable to support people with AS or ASDs in secure provision due to their (often) complex psychiatric histories.

Allen et al (2008) sought to provide a comprehensive insight into both the numbers of offenders on the autism spectrum and their personal experiences of the CJS by surveying individuals in a large geographical area in South Wales in the UK. The research team contacted 98 services, and 235 professionals within those services, and identified 126 people with AS, 33 of whom had engaged in offending behaviours. From this group, 16 people agreed for data to be collected about them via informants and 6 also agreed to be interviewed by the researchers. This illustrates how difficult it can be to involve primary informants in research about sensitive topics. Violent conduct and threatening behaviour were the most frequently reported offending behaviours and informants described how a lack of understanding or awareness of the social consequences of their actions were contributing factors to the offences. The authors discuss the particular difficulties faced by some of the individuals interviewed and, perhaps unsurprisingly, such experiences within the CJS were mostly described in negative terms (e.g. not understanding what was happening next or what was being asked in interviews; finding the CJS stressful and frightening). Overall, Allen et al (2008) concluded that:

‘While the overall finding of the present study was that there was little evidence to support the notion that offending was a significant problem in people with Asperger, most people with this diagnosis who do fall foul of the law clearly struggle to negotiate the criminal justice system’ (p.757).

In perhaps the most authoritative piece of research to date, King and Murphy (2014) conducted a systematic review of the evidence relating to people with ASD in the CJS. Their paper examined prevalence studies focusing on the number of people with ASDs within the CJS, and also studies that considered offending behaviour in populations of people with ASD. Data relating to types of offence, co-occurrence of other psychiatric difficulties, and characteristics of offenders were also examined. King and Murphy (2014) reported that there was substantial variation in the numbers of offenders with ASDs included within each study and the different methodologies used between studies made it difficult to compare them meaningfully. In addition, there were few studies that included unbiased or well-matched groups of participants and so, taken as a whole, there was limited evidence that individuals with ASDs are more likely to commit particular kinds of offences compared to people without ASDs. Overall, the authors

concluded that ‘...people with ASD do not seem to be disproportionately over-represented in the CJS, though they commit a range of crimes and seem to have a number of predisposing features’ (p.2717). However, they also admit that due to the limitations in the extant evidence base ‘...the examination of the relationship between ASD and offending is in its infancy’ (p.2731). Consequently, there is much scope for further, robust and well-controlled research to be conducted to provide clearer evidence about whether a link exists between ASD and offending and, if such a link does exist, to examine whether that takes a particular form or pattern.

The use of more accessible information for people with LDD within the CJS


Talbot (2010) and Poynter (2011) both discuss improvements to the accessibility of information within the CJS since the publication of the *No One Knows* report (Jacobson, 2008). For example, Talbot (2010) note that the Prison Reform Trust and the Prison Service have written an ‘Easy Read’ version of The Prisoner Information Book; and the Prison Reform Trust and the Department of Health have jointly published a similar book specifically for prisoners with disabilities. ‘Easy Read’ is defined as:

‘...providing information using simple words and pictures to make it easier to understand... When information is provided in Easy Read, the pictures support the meaning of the written words. The sentences are short and simple without any hard words or jargon. The information is given without a lot of background details. (NOMS, 2014; Factsheet 1, p.1)’

Additional information about resources that have been made available within the CJS in Easy Read format is summarised in the Factsheets about easy read co-ordinated by 3SC, and jointly produced by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Dyslexia Action, the National Autistic Society and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) (Factsheet 8; NOMS, 2014). Figure 1 shows an example of information in easy read format from the Prison Reform Trust. Other examples include the following from: Gloucestershire (Figure 2); Dorset (Figure 3); the Department of Health (Figure 4); and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (Figure 5). These, and other examples, are available from: <http://www.keyring.org/cjs-easyreadexamples>. Figure 5 is one of the few examples to include symbols alongside photographs and simple text. Although evaluations of at least some of these materials were underway (Poynter, 2011) we could not find any published information about the outcome of these evaluations, though there are personal accounts of the positive effects of using Easy Read materials available (<http://www.keyring.org/cjs-easyread-feedback>).

No One Knows
offenders with learning difficulties and learning disabilities

PRISON REFORM TRUST The Prison Reform Trust works to help people who are in prison. We believe that people in prison should be treated with respect, (kindly) and that prisoners should be helped so that they do not go back to prison.

 The Prison Reform Trust finds out what people think about prison and tells the government ways in which it can do things better. Sometimes the government listens, sometimes it does not.



PRISON REFORM TRUST  The Prison Reform Trust is independent. That means we do not work for the government. We can make decisions for ourselves. We think it is important that we are independent.

Figure 1: Easy Read example from the Prison Reform Trust

Going to the Police Station in Cheltenham

This leaflet was developed in partnership with Gloucestershire Police and Together NHS Foundation Trust.



If the Police think you have broken the law you will have to go to the Police Station

Sometimes people break the law, this is called committing crime.

Some examples are:







- Breaking other peoples things. 
- Touching someone in a bad way. 
- Hurting people. 
- Taking other peoples things without their permission. 

Figure 2: Easy Read information from Gloucestershire Police


Arriving in Custody



You will be taken to a secure part of the police station. This is called **'Custody'**.



You may be asked to wait with a police officer in a **'holding cell'**.



Then you will be taken to the **desk**.

Figure 3: Easy Read information from Dorset Police







<div style="margin-bottom: 15px;">  <p>They look at the type of crime the person might have done. The court decides if they think the person is 'guilty.'</p> <p>'Guilty' means when someone has broken the law and committed a crime.</p> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 15px;">  <p>The staff who make this decision also think about if the person can cope with the Criminal Justice System.</p> <p>Some people are too 'vulnerable' or too unwell to be in prison.</p> <p>If someone is 'vulnerable' it means there is a chance they could be hurt or badly treated by someone else.</p> <p>The person might then go to another support service instead.</p> </div> <div>  <p>If you are ever in the Criminal Justice System you should tell staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have a learning disability or learning difficulty. • How some things can be more difficult for you to do. • When you need extra help to understand or explain things. </div>	<h3 style="text-align: center; margin-top: 0;">Police</h3> <div style="margin-bottom: 15px;">  <p>The book called "Positive Practice, Positive Outcomes," gives information to staff in the police force.</p> <p>It says that it is important to find out early on if people have a learning disability or learning difficulty.</p> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 15px;">  <p>The police should tell other staff if a person has a learning disability or learning difficulty.</p> <p>They should also explain to other staff the things the person finds difficult.</p> </div> <div>  <p>When someone is arrested they will speak to the 'custody officer' at the station.</p> <p>It is the custody officer's job to find out about any medical problems or any special needs the person might have.</p> <p>This includes if they have a learning disability or learning difficulty.</p> </div>
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Figure 4: Easy Read information from the Department of Health

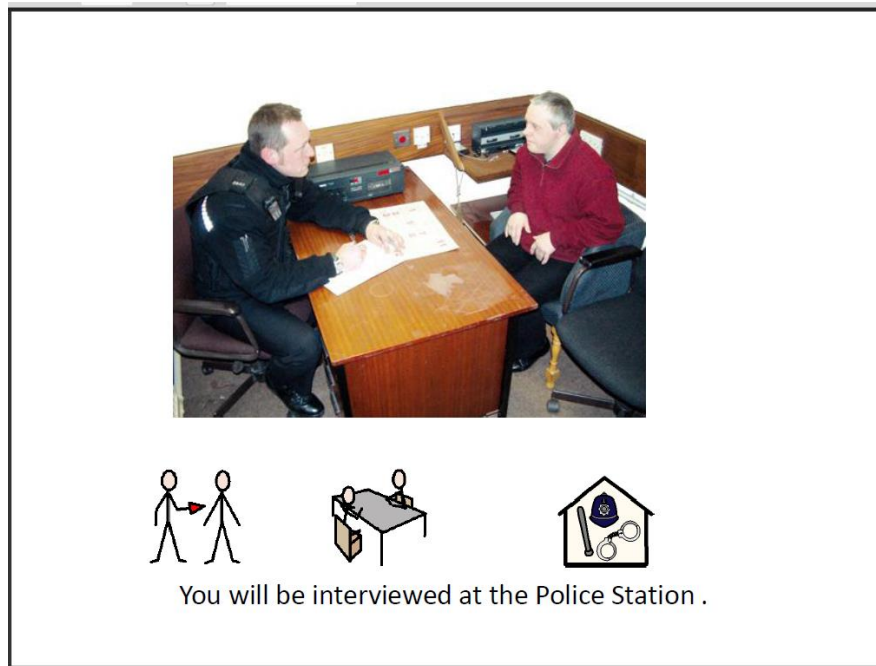


Figure 5: Easy Read information from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Research about accessible information formats for people with LDD

Detheridge and Detheridge (2013) draw upon work and research in school colleges and adult research centers to affirm the contribution that symbols can make to teaching, learning and daily experiences of both adults and children with learning disabilities. They discuss how the use of symbols has progressed from being Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for individuals with severe speech difficulties, to wider use '...in education, in advocacy, in accessing information' (p. xiii). Examples of recent use of Widgit symbols to support understanding include the production of materials and activities for the English National Ballet to make ballet more accessible to children with learning difficulties and disabilities (<http://www.widgit.com/resources/popular-topics/myfirstballet/index.htm>); and a range of health-related resources for children and adults (<http://widgit-health.com/downloads/>). The wealth of reports of creative and successful use capture the current practices of using symbols to support the literacy of some people with LDD, however as the authors note themselves:

'Little research has taken place on the role of symbols to support literacy...[this book] cannot present any formal answers backed up by academic research' (p.xiii).

The use of symbols to support communication and literacy in special schools is widespread in the UK with many anecdotal benefits reported, including reductions in anxiety and frustration and increases in autonomous communication (Abbott & Lucey, 2005). However, in line with

Detheridge and Detheridge's (2013) assertion, there is less research evidence that has looked formally at whether the presentation of materials in more accessible formats significantly improves comprehension for people with LDD. Focusing on symbols specifically, Jones, Long and Finlay (2007) tested whether adding symbols to written text could improve its comprehensibility for adults with LDD. Nineteen adults with mild or borderline learning disabilities were asked to read four short passages of text, two of which had Widgit symbols included, and were subsequently asked questions to test their comprehension. The results demonstrated that participants' comprehension scores were significantly higher for the symbolised passages than the non-symbolised ones, suggesting a benefit for these participants in augmenting the text with symbols.

By contrast, Poncelas and Murphy (2007) found no overall benefit of symbol-based materials in their study, which tested whether a symbol-based political manifesto increased the understanding of material for people with intellectual disabilities. 34 participants with LDD were included and randomly assigned to two groups: one receiving text-based information, and the other, symbol-based information with text. Participants were asked a series of questions about the material, both immediately and a short time after reading the pamphlet. Overall, the results demonstrated that the addition of symbols to simple text did not significantly improve comprehension compared to the text-only group; however, more able participants, and those who had seen symbols before, did show significantly improved understanding at the follow-up test. This suggests that adults with less severe LDD may be more likely to benefit from the addition of symbols to simplified text, especially if they have had prior experience with using symbols.

This finding aligns with Mirenda (2003) who reviewed existing research to explore what AAC modality is preferable to use for people with autism. She concluded that successful communication for individuals with autism relies on a combination of personal modality selection, excellent instruction and best fit with their environment, needs, and communicative partners. In other words, individuals will prefer a particular mode of communication due to a range of factors and these will be highly personalised. This raises an important limitation of the two studies summarised above (Jones et al., 2007; Poncelas & Murphy, 2007), namely that it cannot be assumed that one particular way of presenting information will be beneficial to all of those who see it and, therefore, it perhaps should not be surprising that some contradictory results were found. The success of the mode of presentation depends on the individual characteristics of the person coupled with their familiarity with that mode of presentation and so the likelihood of being able to demonstrate significant changes in understanding over a short period of time is small.

Zentel et al (2007) investigated the influence of different representational formats (text, speech, symbols) on the understanding of learners with LDD accessing information online. In the first study, 20 students with LDD aged 14-22 years were included and different versions of website information were developed that contrasted: text vs text + symbols; and visual only vs. visual + auditory. Findings suggested that the text + symbols + spoken version produced the highest understanding and recognition scores, with text + speech coming in second place. Adding only symbols to written and / or spoken text did not improve understanding and recognition for this group of participants. In a second study, 47 participants with LDD aged 14-21 took part and the authors report mostly similar findings that 'enriching written text *with symbols and spoken text* enhances learning' (p.31; our emphasis). Zentel et al (2007) go on to suggest that by 'only' presenting symbols with text, there could be a 'split attention effect' (p.31) which made the text more difficult to read because cognitive resources were split between trying to understand both the text and the symbols.

Other research has looked at different kinds of accessible formats, specifically those described as Easy Read. Hurtado and colleagues (2014) asked whether Easy Read information is really easier to read and explored whether there were differences in comprehension by comparing a leaflet with pictures and text, with a pictures-only version. 44 adults with LDD were included in the study with all seeing a version of the leaflet with a pictures + text section, and a pictures-only section. The findings suggested that all participants benefitted from having a leaflet shown and read to them but that neither form of presenting the information was more effective at making the document easier to understand. However, there was some evidence that for the 'more intellectually able' participants (p.827), pictures were more effective at aiding comprehension in the absence of text. This led the authors to suggest that two modes of presenting information visually (i.e. text and images) may be more difficult for at least some users to access. They also concluded that the generalised use of text and picture formats for all people with LDD in spite of limited evidence supporting its effectiveness is somewhat concerning, and therefore call for a stronger empirical evidence base. However, the reporting of the study is very limited in the sense that the questions used to assess comprehension of the texts are not included in the paper and so it is very difficult to judge how any change in knowledge was measured.

Fajardo et al (2014) included sixteen students with 'mild' LDD who were asked to read easy-to-read text which varied in terms of length / number of words, and then complete a reading comprehension test. Participants correctly answered more than 80% of the comprehension questions, suggesting that the adjusted format of the text helped individuals to understand the stories presented. Perhaps unsurprisingly, longer texts were more difficult to understand and

the authors discuss the important role that motivation plays in accessing text. In line with Mirenda (2003) and Poncelas and Murphy (2007) above, Fajardo et al (2014) also concluded that: ‘...when adapting texts for this type of students [sic], individual difference [sic] in reading comprehension have to be taken into account’ (p.222).

Overall, the quality of research in this area is generally low with limited sample sizes and a lack of detail in the reporting of methods, which makes it difficult to judge how some of the conclusions were arrived at. Nevertheless, the importance is acknowledged of taking into account the individual needs, motivations, and prior experiences of individuals with LDD when accessing information in different ways; all of these factors can influence whether a particular mode of presentation may be useful or not. In the absence of much formal evidence about the relative effectiveness of different accessible formats for improving comprehension for people with LDD, we agree with Rodgers and Namaganda (2005) who argue that:

‘...where no published research exists to tackle a problem, it is worthwhile reporting suggestions of techniques devised by people with relevant experience’ (p.54).

Consequently, when a need is identified by ‘people with relevant experience’ it is important to try to find solutions that may be helpful, whether or not there is a rigorous and robust evidence base to support taking one particular approach compared to another.

Context of this research

Recognising the value and importance of personal experience, this present evaluation reflects the ideas and vision of individuals working in the CJS and with people on the autism spectrum and their families. Specifically, the idea for the creating more accessible information for people in custody started with a custody nurse who approached Autism Hampshire and asked if the organisation could support her work around looking at developing a custody sheet to support her client base. Autism Hampshire approached Hampshire Constabulary who were supportive of taking the idea forward, and subsequently, the company Widgit Software to develop and support this work. The team at the University of Southampton was approached to conduct an independent evaluation once the content of the sheets was mostly finalised.

The development and evaluation of the Widgit Symbol custody sheets is also situated within a much broader programme of work undertaken between Autism Hampshire and Hampshire Constabulary. In contrast to the reported widespread shortcomings in the police force regarding training and awareness of working with people with LDD (HMIP 2014), Hampshire Constabulary has been working in partnership with Autism Hampshire since 2008 on providing autism awareness training for frontline personnel. To date, more than 3,000 frontline officers

(including PCSOs, custody officers, specialist witness teams, and police officers) have been trained with a further 3,000 being undertaken from 2015; some Appropriate Adults have also been trained, as well as Independent Custody Advisors and Duty Solicitors. In addition to the continued training of frontline police officers, Autism Hampshire will also be providing Custody Refresher training and Specialist Witness and Child Abuse Team training.

The training focuses on helping staff to understand what autism is, how it is diagnosed, and who gets diagnosed; what autism traits / characteristics look like in practice; and what strategies/top tips can be embedded into everyday practice to support people with autism. All of this is linked into scenarios and factual incidents that help to support and bring the information into the daily role of the police officer in order to make the information both relevant and useful. The training seeks to build a toolkit for the police officer on the street to use when needed and gives a knowledge base to build on. It is important to emphasise that the training is not about making people experts in autism but is more about making them ask when they see different behaviours happening 'is there something else going on here'? This self-reflection could prompt personnel to change the way they communicate by modifying their language and really listening to what someone is saying. In addition, the awareness raising includes knowing where the officers as professionals and the people they are working with can get information advice guidance and support should they need it. The focus is about '*Thinking Autism*' and then having the tools in their toolkit to support the person and themselves more effectively.

The specific purpose of the development work on symbol-based custody information between Autism Hampshire, Hampshire Constabulary, The Appropriate Adult Service and Widgit Software was to help those in custody better understand their rights. It is possible that better understanding by those in custody of their rights may help to reduce aggressive and challenging behaviour which may (in part) arise due to difficulties in understanding information as provided in the current standard format. Thus, the symbol-based materials could be useful for anyone who may struggle with literacy, perhaps because they have learning difficulties or a disability; English as an additional language; impaired cognition due to drugs or alcohol; or mental health difficulties. Therefore, the impact of this project could be considerable in terms of the number of people in custody who may benefit from an improved system.

Aims of the project

Initially, the project focuses on people in custody within Hampshire, with the aim of providing supporting evidence that symbol-based custody materials could positively impact on the way custody personnel interact with people in custody. The main aims of the project are twofold:

1. To provide an evidence-based rationale for establishing a common set of accessible information sheets that are in a standardised format and could eventually be rolled out nationwide; and
2. To find out the views of police officers' when using the materials in relation to (a) the acceptability / feasibility of using the materials in custody and (b) perceptions about how people in custody responded to the materials.

Specific research questions

In translating these aims into specific research questions, this pilot project was designed to address the following:

1. How can the symbol-based information sheets be effectively introduced to custody teams?
2. In what ways do the symbol-based information sheets influence the communication and engagement with individuals in custody, from the perspective of the police officers?
3. What are the views of relevant stakeholders about the symbol-based information sheets?
'Relevant stakeholders' in this context means:
 - people on the autism spectrum and their families;
 - Appropriate Adults;
 - senior personnel within the criminal justice system;
 - the custody officers involved in the pilot.

Methodology

Design

This research took a qualitative approach to answering these questions by (1) implementing the Widgit Symbol custody sheets in two Hampshire Constabulary custody centres for a pilot period of 4 weeks and (2) exploring the views and perceptions about the Widgit Symbol custody sheets of key stakeholders, including custody inspectors and sergeants, through individual interviews and focus groups. It should be noted that no offenders were observed during the pilot implementation and so there is no direct evaluation of the use of the custody sheets with offenders within a custody context. Given the importance of staff attitudes towards implementing any changes to practices (Chown, 2010; Bradley, 2009) and the difficulties of gaining the views of individuals who have been presented with the materials in custody (Allen et al., 2008), this project sought to focus primarily on eliciting the attitudes of a range of 'user representatives' (or stakeholders) about their views on the accessibility / appropriateness and usability of the Widgit Symbol materials.

Methods and procedure

Practical implementation of the custody sheets

The project team at the University of Southampton worked closely with the funding partners to identify and approach two custody centres willing to support the pilot implementation of the custody sheets. Two custody centres, differing in size, age of facilities, and location were chosen for inclusion and the relevant custody Inspectors contacted. Both were very interested in, and supportive of, the project and initial visits to the custody centres were arranged. During these visits, practical discussions about when, how and where the custody sheets could be introduced took place, resulting in very helpful recommendations for making this process as straightforward and feasible as possible for custody teams.

Specifically, it was agreed with the custody Inspectors that a short briefing sheet would be produced that summarised the project and what custody officers were expected to do. A draft version of this was produced by the research team and circulated to the Inspectors and other custody personnel for feedback. In addition, Hampshire Constabulary's Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) advisor provided feedback on the sheet. Some minor revisions were made to the sheets following feedback and the final version produced (0Appendix 1: Briefing sheet for custody staff). It is important to note that it was at the custody sergeants' discretion and judgement as to whether the sheets were given to any detainees. All detainees continued to receive the standard rights and entitlements leaflet. Visits to the custody centres also clarified how information regarding whether, when and to whom any of the sheets were given to

detainees entering custody. Custody personnel suggested keeping a simple log that detailed the date, custody record # and specific sheets used; this was developed and agreed with the custody centres involved (Appendix 2: Custody record log).

The initial visits to the custody centres and discussions with custody personnel also resulted in some changes to the presentation of information via the Widgit Symbol custody sheets. It became clear that a z-fold 'standard' rights and entitlements leaflet was in use at custody centres (Figure 6) which, according to PACE (1984), must be given to all individuals entering custody. It was agreed that an equivalent version, covering the essential information, that looked similar to the standard leaflet in terms of overall size and colour, would be helpful to produce and which should be given *alongside the standard form*. With agreement from the funding partners, this leaflet was designed and produced by Widgit Software. Feedback was again sought from Hampshire Constabulary's PACE advisor regarding the suitability and appropriateness of the information presented, as well as from the other funding partners; some minor revisions were made as a result and the final version produced (Figure 7). The full Widgit Symbol leaflet is included in Appendix 3: The Widgit Symbol rights and entitlements leaflet).

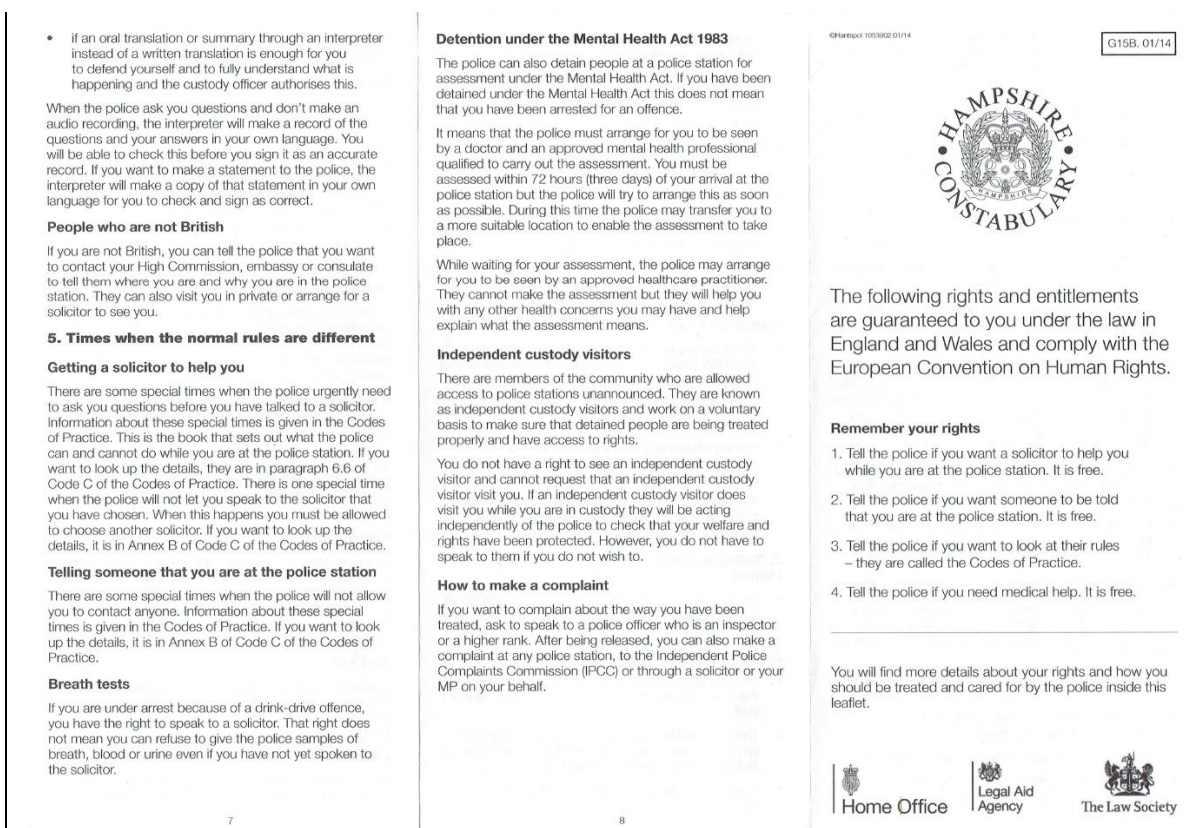


Figure 6: The standard 'rights and entitlements' leaflet give to all detainees entering custody

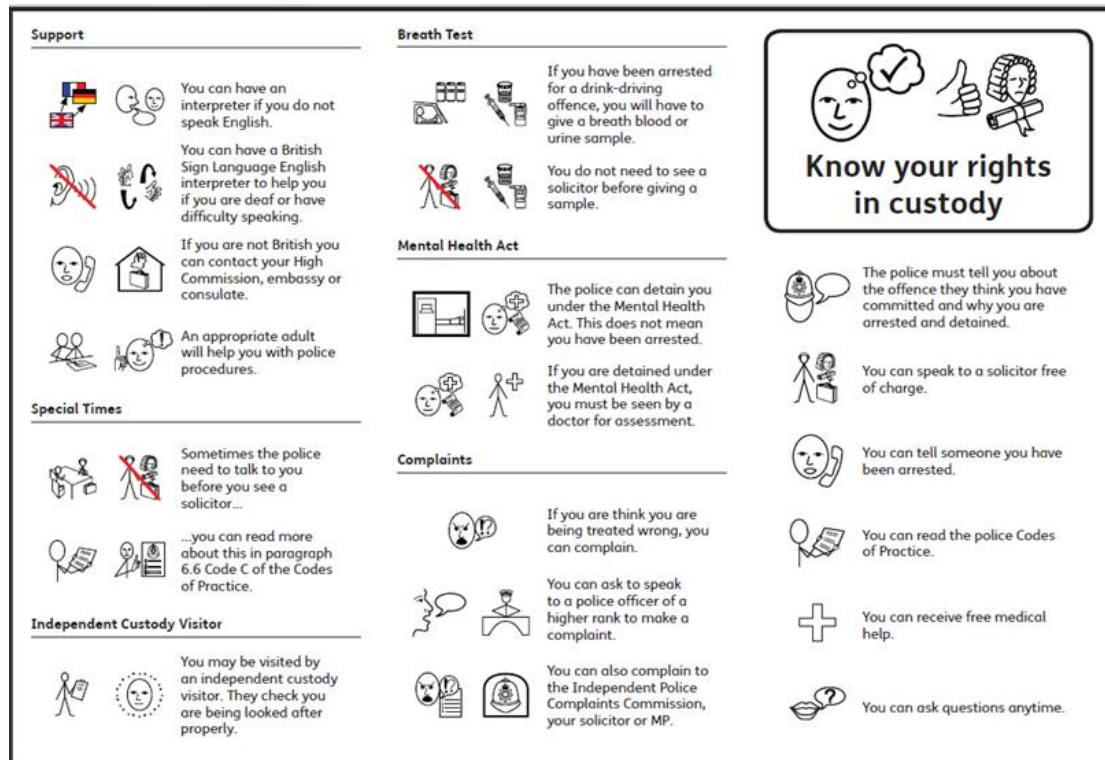


Figure 7: One side of the Widgit Symbol 'rights and entitlements' leaflet

This initial Widgit Symbol 'rights and entitlements' leaflet was printed in black and white and copies (to retain similarity with the 'standard' leaflet) distributed to the pilot custody centres. In response to a suggestion that arose during the initial discussions with custody personnel, additional information using the symbol format was provided in a separate folder (Figure 8). The folder contained separate laminated sheets with further information regarding specific aspects of processes and procedures; three copies of the folder were given to one custody centre and one folder to the other. Guidance as to the content and use of these was very helpful in deciding how information could be provided to detainees during the pilot period. A list of the sheets included in the folders is located in Appendix 4: List of additional sheets included in black folder).

Before the pilot project commenced, agreement to use the Widgit Symbol custody sheets was sought, and granted, by the Hampshire Criminal Justice Group. In addition, the researcher from the University of Southampton attended a meeting of nineteen representatives of the CJS at the Central Family Court in London where the materials were discussed and agreed as useful, appropriate and accurate for use with the detained person. Additionally, all who attended the meeting positively supported the project.

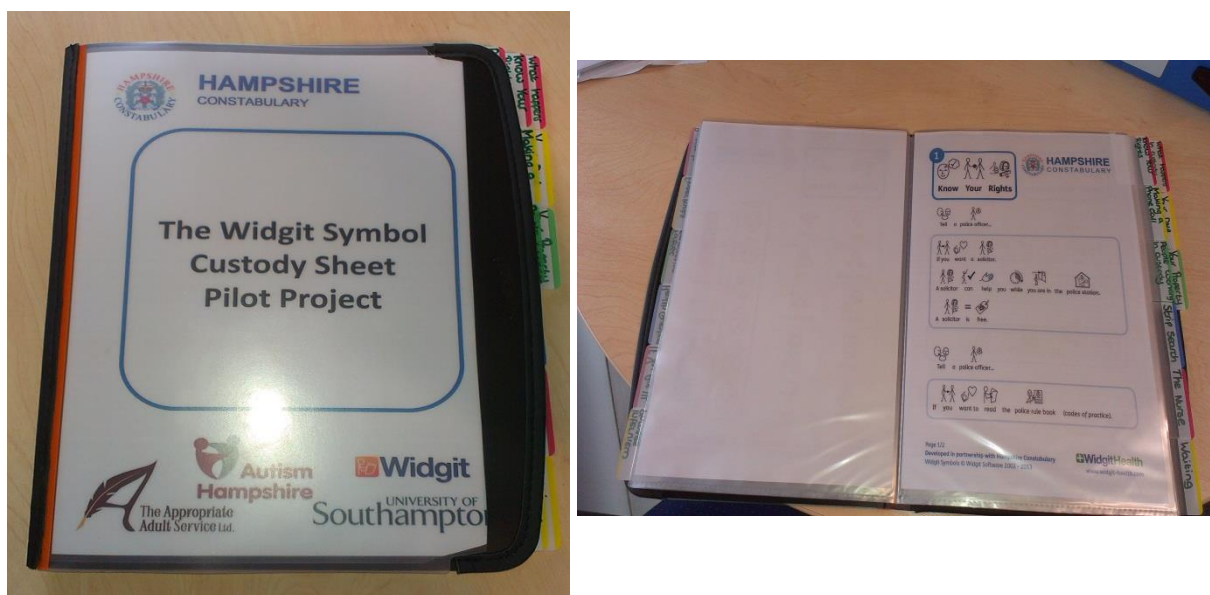


Figure 8: Folders containing laminated sheets with additional information

Timeline of the pilot implementation

Following ethical approval for the project from the University of Southampton (see below) the Widgit Symbol custody sheets were used in two custody centres for a period of 4 weeks during August-September 2014. The sheets were available across all shifts and information about the pilot communicated to all teams initially by the custody Inspectors and then through the custody Sergeants. During the pilot, the researcher remained in contact with the two centres by visiting and checking that sufficient copies of the materials were available and answering any questions that arose.

Follow-up interviews with custody personnel

At the end of the 4-week pilot implementation, the researcher visited both custody centres once a week at different times of the day, over a period of about four weeks, to seek feedback from custody personnel about the Widgit Symbol sheets. Interviewees participated voluntarily with discussions lasting between 11-34 minutes, all of which were audio-recorded for subsequent transcription and analysis. Interviews were based on a semi-structured schedule of questions (Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview for feedback from custody personnel) which asked custody personnel about their views of the sheets, their experiences of using them, and suggestions for whether / how the sheets (and their use) could be improved in the future. In addition, a separate pro forma for gathering further information about who had received the Widgit Symbol sheets in custody was completed by the custody inspector following the pilot implementation (Appendix 6: Pro forma for custody sheet information). The pilot implementation

of the sheets and follow-up interviews with custody personnel were designed to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3 of the project.

Interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders

Also to answer research question 3, we aimed to speak to a range of stakeholders in addition to custody personnel. Specifically, we sought to include: people on the autism spectrum and their families; Appropriate Adults; and senior personnel within the criminal justice system. Our funding partners provided initial contacts for each of these groups which we followed-up; in addition, we pursued a snowball sampling strategy from existing and emerging contacts to involve a wider group of participants. Most participants were initially contacted via email to explore their interest and willingness to take part; an information sheet about the project was included at this stage of the communication (see ethics section below). If individuals were willing to participate then the practicalities of meeting with them were arranged; in some cases, this was face-to-face as a small group or individually, or via the telephone or Skype – depending on preferences. Participants were asked to complete consent forms prior to interviews taking place (see ethics section). Where permission was granted, all interviews / focus groups were audio-recorded for subsequent transcription and analysis. Focus group participants, and some of the interviewees who requested this, were sent questions in advance of the discussion. As part of the interviews and focus groups participants were given copies of the Widgit Symbol rights and entitlements leaflet to look at alongside the national Easy Read version of the rights and entitlements notice produced by the Home Office and the (now defunct) National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), and designed by CHANGE

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/notice-of-rights-and-entitlements-easy-read>).

Copies of focus group agendas and semi-structured interview schedules are included in Appendix 7: Focus group agenda (accessible version) and Appendix 8: Semi-structured interview schedule (Senior CJS personnel example)).

Ethics

The project was reviewed and approved by the University of Southampton's Faculty of Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Ref # 11930). All participants were provided with information about the project in advance, including in a more accessible form where appropriate (Appendix 9a: Participant Information Sheet (adult participants; focus groups); Appendix 9b: Participant information sheet (young people)). All participants were also asked to sign a consent form before interviews or focus groups commenced (Appendix 10a: Consent form for adult participants). Where young people were involved, a parent or carer provided informed consent for their participation, and the young people provided assent to take part (Appendix 10b:

Assent form for young people). [Copies of all versions of all documents are not included in the Appendices, only examples to illustrate the key messages; copies of any of the ethics documents can be obtained from the lead author by request].

Findings

Participants

In total, 41 people were included in this pilot project, 29 in the form of individual interviews and 12 in small focus groups of 3 people. The breakdown across our four main participant groups was as follows:

1. **Custody personnel (n=14)**: two custody Inspectors and 12 custody sergeants from across the two custody centres took part in follow-up interviews about the Widgit Symbol custody sheets following the 4-week pilot implementation;
2. **Young people, families and support workers (n=12)**: three parents and three young people on the autism spectrum took part in separate focus groups that combined their views in a meeting at the end; one young person and two support workers from the Youth Offending Team (YOT) took part in a second focus group; one parent of a child with autism, and one adult couple with learning disabilities were also interviewed;
3. **Appropriate Adults (n=8)**: three Appropriate Adults took part in a focus group and a further four were interviewed individually. One accredited legal representative was also interviewed. In addition, we sent out a short follow-up questionnaire post-pilot and received four responses;
4. **Senior personnel within the criminal justice system (n=7)**: individual interviews were completed with three solicitors, two managers from the YOT, one manager for a magistrate's court, and one magistrate. We also contacted a Judge who was interested in the project and willing to take part; however, there are strict rules and procedures that the judiciary – and researchers - need to follow to involve Judges in research; following these procedures would have been beyond the resources and time-frame of the project and so we did not pursue the interview with the Judge.

Custody sheets used during the pilot implementation

27 completed pro formas were returned summarising brief details about to whom the Widgit Symbol forms were given. During the pilot period, 712 people were recorded as entering custody across the two centres which means that 3.8% were given the Widgit Symbol 'rights and entitlements' leaflet. Of these, only three were also given additional sheets to read from the folder; in all cases these were related to health issues (although the exact sheets used were not specified). Four out of the 27 detained persons given a Widgit Symbol leaflet were female and 23 were male; ages ranged between 13-66 years, with eight being aged under 18 years; the majority (n=25) were of White British ethnic origin. An Appropriate Adult was requested to attend in all but eight cases.

The pro forma asked for any additional information and this was used to indicate reasons why the Widgit Symbol sheet had been given. Two detainees were described as having Aspergers or autism alongside other difficulties (e.g. suicidal tendencies; ADHD). More commonly noted difficulties amongst those given the Widgit Symbol leaflet were depression and self-harm, other mental health difficulties, substance abuse, and dyslexia / difficulties reading and writing. In a few cases, the officer completing the pro forma added a few further comments or details. Two of the detainees were reported as saying that the Widgit leaflet was good and 'better than the standard issue'; however, it was also noted that one detainee said the 'pictures don't really explain his rights'.

Findings relating to research question 1: How can the symbol-based information sheets be effectively introduced to custody teams?

For the following sections, many direct quotes from participants are included to illustrate the points being made; this is the primary data of the study and, therefore this is used frequently to show the range, as well as similarity, of views.

There were some prominent themes in the data when interviewees were asked about whether and how the sheets could be introduced more widely for use in the future. Firstly, different respondents talked about the importance of avoiding too much email communication and using **verbal briefings / training sessions** to introduce and explain the use of the sheets. Face-to-face briefings or training were viewed as preferable because this would avoid '*death by email*' and would provide a clearer reminder about the importance of using the sheets, as one custody officer noted:

'...because we get so many emails...sometimes they will just get glanced over and then left and then you might forget about that, so it's good that it's reinforced with a verbal sort of hand over regarding it...'

In addition, training sessions might allow time beforehand to get familiar with the materials and to avoid rushing the implementation '*...because come the time when they are asked the questions they need to be able to just explain them a little bit and have a little bit of knowledge.'*

Some respondents also suggested that being clear about this being an **evidence-based implementation** would be helpful, specifically letting others know that the sheets had been '*...trialled and tested in a centre or two ...'* because '*...the only trouble is we don't really know how effective it is'*. Having tested the sheets elsewhere might help to get greater buy-in from other custody centres because:

'...the fact that you have convinced them that it works in one custody block will be much more easy to sell when you move it across to the other blocks.'

One custody officer suggested she would like more background information about the history of how and why this type of leaflet is being recommended. She thinks that it would be important to communicate *'...success stories...that would encourage people'* because she said they are bombarded with new initiatives and this would give them a reason to use this. This point was emphasised by another officer who suggested that a training session / verbal briefing about the sheets would be helpful and could perhaps include a PowerPoint with information about the results of the pilot; not least because: *'We do certainly have our fair share of people that this might be useful for'*. However, one custody officer and one of the Appropriate Adults both suggested that the leaflets may be less helpful or appropriate for **repeat offenders**:

'...the people who would normally get to pick it up and read it are the ones that are coming in for the first time... they're looking and thinking well, this is all new, I'm scared, I'm in a new environment, I've been arrested, I'll take everything...'

A barrister and some of the Appropriate Adults also suggested there could be **a greater role for Appropriate Adults** in the use of the sheets, specifically relating to the use of the additional sheets in the black folders because the custody officer might not have enough time to go through some of the sheets with the detained person and this was something that an Appropriate Adult could do. They would of course also need some training *'...in what the symbols mean [so that they] can comment on how useful the detained person found them [the sheets]'*.

Finally, although the participants suggested specific ways in which the custody sheet implementation could be strengthened, they were also **very supportive of the idea** generally. One of the inspectors commented that the use of the sheets was not particularly onerous because *'...there wasn't actually much for staff to do...'* in terms of incorporating them into existing practices. This is an important point because at least one of the custody officers talked about how difficult it can be to make changes:

'I think if I'm honest police officers are naturally ... we are always slow to change... change always makes us feel uncomfortable [and]...we are notoriously slow to adapt to change.'

Nevertheless, it was felt that gaining buy-in from staff for new initiatives through mandates from senior officers could be valuable for supporting the necessary changes: *'...getting the powers that be to keep pushing it and then eventually it will almost become second nature...'*

There was wide support from respondents about for the need for **consistency across people and contexts** in the use of a particular format for accessible information; that is, for the sheets to be used with all those coming into custody and in all custody centres, as well in the courts and other contexts / stages of the CJS, for example:

'...once it has been developed, I think if it is going to be used it should be used country wide, I think it's a lot easier if all the ... all the police areas use the same system.'

'...[this could] go all the way through...from the police station, through the magistrates court, potentially probation, witness services...to explain the different steps at each different kind of stage may be even to defence solicitors and prosecution who deal with witnesses.'

'...if we have that information for some kind of leaflet like this to be handed to the defendant as they come through [to Magistrate's Court] just to make them kind of calmer.'

In addition, two respondents felt that it would also be useful to have the symbol-based rights and entitlements information available as a poster in the waiting areas: *'...if it's on a wall you tend to stand and look.'*

Generally, there was more support for the idea that the use of the sheets should be compulsory for everyone as these comments demonstrate:

'...we'd give it all to them when they come in that's what we do, that's what we are required to do, so we can't just pick and choose as to when.'

'We'd have to do it because the law says we have to do it, if it was an option when you're busy options get left behind and you follow the minimum standards of the rules, so I would say if it was an optional thing in times of rush, stress, pressure they might get left behind... if it became a statutory, you have to do this....we would do it and then that's fine.'

In agreement with this position, one officer suggested that the sheets would need to be mandatory because otherwise the police run the risk of the claim that some people are being disadvantaged by not having access to it; another suggested that if a custody sergeant is asked to identify to whom individual sheets should be given this could *'...alienate that person that you've got.... might turn them against you and break that rapport'*.

Not everyone agreed with these views although contrary opinions on this topic were very much the minority. One person thought that it might be *'insulting'* to give someone this format if they did not have any literacy problems; another felt that it should be a discretionary decision to give

out the symbol leaflet, although also conceded that they may not remember it especially during a busy shift which may provide a case for giving it out to everyone as part of the standard procedures.

Findings relating to research question 2: In what ways do the symbol-based information sheets influence the communication and engagement with individuals in custody, from the perspective of the police officers?

Further to the positive responses from custody personnel and other stakeholders summarised under research question 1 above, the 14 custody personnel provided more details about using the sheets and their attitudes towards them. These attitudes were mostly very positive and staff could see the potential for having the Widgit Symbol leaflets as '*...a practical and useful bit of kit to complement what they are already doing*'. There were some main themes in the responses provided to questions that asked where and how the sheets had been used and whether the sheets were perceived to have made a difference, either for the detained person and / or the police.

Firstly, there was a sense from some of the custody personnel that the sheets were useful for **intervening early** in the custody process, for example:

'...whatever we can have to spot those risks and deal with them at the earliest possible stage, particularly people who are vulnerable ... age, illness, learning abilities, health...'

Related to this was the idea that the sheets could help to **bridge the gap** while waiting in custody for an Appropriate Adult (AA) to arrive, for example:

'...the person is left in some sort of uncertainty and limbo... we would ensure that the person is obviously offered drinks...but when we are talking about the intricacies of decisions they may need to make to do with if they are going to provide a consent to give ... a sample of blood or etc. etc. yeah they may not understand that...'

'We get caught in that trap of thinking, well they'll be alright they're going to have an AA... [the sheets could] potentially bridge that gap.... To give them some reassurance until someone is there as an AA that can explain things a bit more to them.'

Some interviewees suggested that using the sheets could improve the robustness and professionalism of the custody process by supporting officers to **cover all bases**. For example, one officer suggested the sheets could be to avoid a judge ruling the case as inadmissible due to the process being carried out incorrectly because the person did not understand their rights. Similar views were expressed by others:

'...[the sheets would] really, really minimise those situations where we have missed a trick.'

'I would be much more comfortable explaining something like that than reiterating the same point over and over again....if you can work with this... how about you look at this then and see if it makes it any easier.... We can't say that we haven't tried every way.'

'I don't think it would do any harm and if it helps one out of 10 people to understand the process that you wouldn't normally have given one of those to, then you've done the right thing haven't you?'

'...what I liked [was] that when I've finished booking in the DP I'd like them to feel confident that they know what their rights are and confident that they are going to be treated fairly.'

'I would like to think it would make them feel as though we have their welfare and their interests at heart, that we have gone and taken steps that ... what we are not doing is saying here are the rules take it or leave it, you know, actually we need you to understand this... I think it would have a positive influence... Ideal... I like the size of that.... I like the system, it's simple enough to follow isn't it?'

Related to the idea of ensuring the process is robust, the most frequently discussed theme to emerge from the interviews was the value of the sheets in potentially **improving understanding and engagement** with essential information and, as a result, preventing escalation of incidents or supporting a better relationship between the detained person and the custody staff. For example, using the Widgit symbol custody sheet might lead to the detained person being able to:

'...engage with us far more, be more open and we can... prevent something unpleasant happening...They might take a bad turn or have an episode ... they might have a psychosis episode, whatever else.'

The sheets were also described as potentially being able to minimise *'...stress for someone detained against their will ... it makes sure we can look after their needs better.'*

Interviewees showed concern that the custody environment can be **frightening, intimidating, confusing and stressful**:

'I think we have to be you know? On top of our game as custody staff because of the environment that people are coming into, it's never pleasant being in a cell... depriving someone of their liberty is massive... it's a high risk environment in here...'

'if people are struggling to understandbecause they are taken out of their safe zone or their way of doing things it can be very difficult...it can be quite a testing environment in custody... got to get the stresses of life out of them, it's bad enough being in a custody environment, got to get the stresses of life away for the time that they are with us...'

I think actually you're taking someone's whole liberty away...for some people who have never been in trouble... that's a massive thing isn't it?

They used these descriptions to highlight the need to find ways to address the needs of the detained person more accurately. However they also agreed that while supplying information using Widgit symbols was helpful it did not negate the need for effective verbal interaction and the involvement of an Appropriate Adult (AA):

'there's nothing which we can do in custody with them without an AA, so it's irrelevant if they have this sheet or not, so what this is, is a stop gap between the time them being arrested and detention authorised and the time of an AA attending the police station...'

There was some perceived value in the difference / novelty of the Widgit sheet compared to the standard form for drawing the attention of the detained person to important information, as one interviewee described, the detained person said: *'...oh yeah that's alright, it's something different I'll have a look at that'*. Two of the custody officers described similar experiences:

'I have used them for every juvenile that's come in and it's really made a difference, with the normal forms that we've got here juveniles I've found just look at them and leave them there whereas the Widgit forms they've picked up and started reading and actually taken them away with them... I don't know if it's that there's less words or the pictures but there's something that makes them more appealing to the juveniles. I've also used them for people with mental health issues, those that need an AA, the ones that have problems with reading and writing and all of them the reaction has been the same, it's a new leaflet and it's obviously more appealing than the bog standard rights that we give out which most people disregard.'

'...the funny thing was everyone always went to that one...[pointing to the Widgit symbol sheet]...whether it was just because it was a smaller leaflet or they wanted to know what it was and then they would pay more attention to that... than the original one we've got or what the impact was, whether they liked it or not I don't really have any feedback on that.'

There were various characteristics of the Widgit Symbol sheets that custody personnel described as potentially supporting the suggested improved engagement and understanding of

the rights and entitlements information. Custody personnel liked the visual nature of the sheets and suggested that the illustrations could help to:

- *'alleviate... fear and confusion'*
- *'give them that time just to look at the pictures and give them a prompt as to this is what it's about'*
- *'help people who are not so well educated to understand what they are entitled to.'*

The sheets were described by different people as:

- *'friendlier'*
- *'simple English'*
- *'easier, it's more direct, to the point'*
- *'[providing] a bit more clarity'*
- *'more user friendly'*
- *'quite succinct, an easy read'*
- *'a lot more straightforward'*
- *'reassuring'*
- *'clearer'*

In addition, one officer suggested that the size of the leaflet was practical and could have benefits:

'...the fact that it's sort of pocket size, you can fold that and put it in your pocket and draw on it again whereas most of the forms are A4... this they might well put it in their pocket and keep it as sort of a guide if you like.'

The novelty / difference of the sheets were also suggested to be valuable for the custody officer, as well as the detained person because:

'...the danger with custody sergeants day in day out saying the same things I think sometimes the tone's importance is lost, 'cause something we might say 15 times a day that person may not have heard before or may hear it very infrequently... so I can certainly see a use for the concept.'

The accessibility of the symbol format was also thought by some to be advantageous for a wide range of people who might come into custody, and for presenting information about different parts of the custody process:

'...foreign nationals as well, the folder with all the little bits in there to help out, like booking in and taking DNA and stuff like that.'

'there is a big spectrum of learning disabilities and a big proportion of people we deal with are vulnerable to some extent socially or through a poor education and those sort of factors and I think it could be an assistance for a lot of people to some extent...'

However, there were also some **reservations** expressed about the use of sheets, mostly relating to the appropriateness of giving the sheets to all those coming into custody and how to make sensitive decisions about this *'...as a tool I do think it's beneficial although I don't see it as something you would use often'*. For example, one officer described how difficult this decision-making is because:

'... those dilemma ones which you think there may be something but you can't be sure and the person hasn't disclosed which makes it very, very difficult... and a lot of the time a lot of those disabilities are hidden'

A couple of officers raised some concerns about whether giving the Widgit sheet to everyone might be antagonistic or unhelpful, while also acknowledging that the sheets would be useful for some:

'...for some people, it would be very beneficial ... the wrong person might see you know, I'm not a child type thing...because people sometimes come in slightly anti-police anyway, they're not particularly pleased by the situation they are in and that might just sort of aggravate them even more if it was the wrong person... to be able to give it to the right sort of people or people you feel would benefit from it would be useful to have as a tool.'

'I would not want to give anyone the impression that we were underestimating their educational skills by giving them one...it can be quite a testing environment in custody... if they think we are being rude to them or horrible to them or sneaky to them, they'll take offence.'

Another two officers were concerned about the potential downside to increasing the amount of paper handed out to people coming into custody:

'...it's more paper for them...I think they are even more likely to leave it on the side and go off and not even take the time to look at it.'

'...it could almost be seen as you give two lots of the same information as slightly bureaucratic... the cost of the printing paper, to duplicate everything for every single

person would...be a cost implication to consider... in difficult financial budgets that we are all facing at the moment...'

One officer, who had given out a number of the Widgit Symbol sheets during the pilot was not convinced about their benefits because '*...they [detainees] just didn't understand really what the pictures were about*'. For this reason he decided not to use the black folder with the additional leaflets:

'...because they didn't, the times that they did read this [the folder], the few times they did, people were like... I still can't really understand what that means, what do these pictures mean? They were dismissive of it in that respect.'

Findings relating to research question 3: What are the views of relevant stakeholders about the symbol-based information sheets?

This section begins by focusing on the views of those who have had direct experiences of the CJS, and so this includes the CJS professionals, Appropriate Adults, and the young person and two support workers from the YOT (the views of custody personnel were covered in the previous section). The views of those without direct experience of the CJS are then presented, and this includes the young people on the autism spectrum and their families, as well as the couple with LDD.

When comparing the Widgit Symbol rights and entitlements leaflet with the Home Office Easy Read version there was a range of views expressed by those **with direct experiences of the CJS**. Some felt that the Widgit version was better; another suggested that having a choice between the two would be helpful; others felt that having anything that might help would be beneficial; and some were much less sure or positive about the potential perceived benefits. Overall, however, the views were **mainly very positive** in support of trying to do something different and to improve the current situation; these views mostly align with the comments already included in the previous sections relating to research questions 1 & 2, for example, **consistency and simplification** of presentation were valued:

'...the Widgit symbols are consistent so when you see a symbol for a solicitor it's the same symbol all the way through which I have to say I think is preferable...'

'...it's a good shot at explaining the information in a fairly... basic level... it's a good crack, it goes well with the other one, they could choose which one they want...no big words in it, it's quite easily understood, you can look at the picture and even if you can't read too well you can sort of get a grasp of what it is about.'

' [it can be] quite scary for someone in a cell to say "excuse me I don't understand this"... I think it's really good...[it] could be really stabilising.'

'it's not a bombardment, it's those basics that are key to that young person when they are in custody...letting them know where they stand, what they should do and what to expect rather than loads of confusing jargon...'

'[it is] a very positive step in the right direction... I think the idea is great... Just because someone has been through the system six or seven times doesn't mean they understand it.'

'I think it's a very good idea, I think it's an extremely good idea, I think something like this which they can keep with them ... and read, assuming they can read of course is only going to be of help to them...'

'yeah quite clever isn't it? Little stick man thing with a doctor in it, yeah it's alright...yeah it's better than all these, it's just quick and simple and it gives you all the basics doesn't it ... I'd want to know what it is... it'd be different and I'd be like, oh yeah, I'll have a look at this see what it's like... then I'd read it and get me head down... yeah it is quite helpful, if I'd had this when I first got arrested, it's quite basic isn't it?'

'...anything that can be done to improve a young person's experience within a secure setting, a custody setting... is a beneficial piece of work in my view...it contributes not only to their welfare but to a fair and effective criminal justice system...'

Views were more varied in relation to **who should receive the sheets** when entering custody i.e. whether this should be at the discretion of the custody sergeant or whether there should be universal use of the leaflets. There were views expressed that supported both approaches; although there was more support amongst interviewees generally for wider use:

'I don't see them getting anything like that now, I think for a lot of people it would help, both juveniles and vulnerable adults because it's using symbols that they already understand...'

'I think something like that would be helpful to the vast majority of people who come into custody... as long as it's clear that they are not an exhaustive answer to everything...'

'...just a skim read of it clearly shows that for some of our young people this is far more accessible than this. For me as well it's far more accessible... it's been developed...with autism in mind but diagrams, figures like this, that would be useful for unaccompanied asylum seekers for example who don't have a full understanding of English, people with

general learning difficulties, people who are visual learners talking earlier about our learning styles assessments. It's got...the potential to be invaluable in all sorts of different areas.'

However, others were less sure about the usefulness of the Widgit sheets in a custody context, although, overall, these views were less frequently expressed:

'I don't know whether kiddies sort of pictures should be like for youths and that and then the adults should just have the essay, just go through it...If I got this I would expect it cause I'm a child still. It's for kids but...that's my opinion really.'

'I don't know how many people that would actually work for... personally I don't know them... if it was me in custody I wouldn't understand them... if people already come across these then for people to have them in custody, yes, that would be brilliant... if they've not seen it before it's not really, some of it is clear...'

'...my initial view of this is that it is complicating something that doesn't need to be complicated or further complicated...[are they]just trying to do us out of a job?'

One interviewee acknowledged the challenge in deciding for whom the sheets would be appropriate but was pragmatic about how this could be approached:

'Excellent because as I said I don't honestly think we fully take the needs of the young people into consideration, well not just young people but adults as well to be perfectly frank... you will obviously get the situation where the person, some people would say I don't want to be patronised I can read that but I mean you can't be all things to all men can you?'

Two interviewees were positive overall about the sheets but also raised some caveats that they felt were worth considering. The first related to the importance of ensuring that detainees still **understand the process** and that custody personnel are not tempted to assume that this understanding can solely be conveyed or supported via the symbol-based sheet:

... I'd be slightly concerned to put in the caution with the Widgit, the only reason ... is because I think it's a very important part of the process and needs to be explained stage by stage rather than it be written out with the pictures, I don't think that will be a good idea... but I think the general idea is a really good one... if someone was given this in a police station they are more likely to look at it... My own concern would be that it's all in very simplified form... they might look at the pictures but not then fully understand it'.

Secondly, this respondent urges care with regard to making things too complicated because otherwise there is a risk that we could be:

'...replacing one dense language with another dense language...I think for a short sort of A5 pamphlet those sort of symbols are fine and are very useful but if you try and go into detail and try and convey a lot of knowledge, a lot of text, I think you're just duplicating the problem of intelligibility ... if it's done in a simple way ... as long as it's not over complicated there's a place for this...'

The respondents from the Appropriate Adult Service were keen to identify the value of their role in terms of communicating key facts verbally. One explained that she currently uses drawings to help the detained person understand key points and thought that the symbols would support this method saying *'we could use that to help us, save them having to put up with my drawings.'*

For those participants with **no direct experiences of the CJS**, the main messages about the potential value and appropriateness of the Widgit Symbol sheets were again **very positive**. Participants compared the Home Office Easy Read rights and entitlements document (which is 33 pages long) with the two-sided Widgit Symbol leaflet. Parents of young people with autism suggested that the Widgit Symbol leaflets were better because the pictures are straightforward, there's less information (and so this is less confusing), and it's less intimidating because it's not such a thick document. Comments from the young people on the autism spectrum made similar points (expressed independently of parents):

'I like the layout of it [the Widgit sheet] and it's just nice and small isn't it? And it's simple, understandable and it is just like straight to the point of it instead of like tons of stuff and it's not all too... them pictures are understandable but not just distracting... The writing is quite good too isn't it?... It's memorable isn't it?... I don't want to say like it looks more fun but it does (looking a symbol sheet) ...if it's more interesting you focus on it, that one you kind of like [the Home Office Easy Read version], it is like blurred. It just looks like serious and rubbish. The pictures aren't massive on that one either so they stand out more.'

'I think it's good because the pictures aren't as detailed they are more like clearer, they are not as distracting... I like the fact that there aren't loads of pages to read through, it's just like a little thing you can read a page at a time.'

'I think it's good because you feel like you've got a lot less to read when you're handed this [the Widgit Symbol leaflet], extremely light compared to this [the Home Office Easy Read version].'

The Widgit version of the leaflet was also preferred by the couple with LDD, compared to the Home Office Easy Read version:

'I'd feel intimidated by all of that writing [on the Home Office Easy Read version] and having to sit there and read it all when you're stressed and you're upset and you don't know what's going on, I wouldn't want to sit and read all that bumph and then I probably wouldn't understand half of it...if it was me I'd just want to throw it against the door... where the one with the symbols is more, I could understand it straight away and I'd know what was going on...once I'd calmed down I'd be quite happy to read something with symbols and something that I could understand.'

In line with comments from other participants with experience of the CJS, interviewees generally expressed the view that the sheets would be of value for most people coming into custody, while also noting some limitations, for example:

'I think it's very good ... in my opinion I think that the format is broken down more, is a lot better not just for people with disabilities but for people in general because the form here with the symbols and the bigger lettering is in my opinion a lot more strong, a lot more soothing...it's a lot more easy to read and a lot more sort of relaxing to read, more confident.'

'Absolutely brilliant without a doubt, should have been done years ago something like this ... it's so visually stimulating for a child, young adult to see these they would know exactly what's happening...The only thing is if you've got a stroppy teenager that was obviously ADHD, you know on the spectrum would think it's a bit babyish but I think when it came down to it, if they were very stressed they would want that without a doubt.'

Suggestions from participants about how to change or improve the Widgit Symbol sheets

All participants were asked how they thought the Widgit symbol leaflets might be improved or changed if they were to be used more widely in the future. Table 1 below summarises the suggested changes, including how many of the interviewees suggested the same change. They are presented in frequency order from the most people suggesting a particular change through to the least. As the authors of the report, we do not make any judgements about whether any of these particular changes *should* be made, but include the suggestions in full here to inform Widgit Software, Autism Hampshire and Hampshire Constabulary about changes that *could* be made, if they feel these are appropriate.

Table 1: Suggested changes or improvements to the Widgit Symbol custody sheets

#	The change that they suggest	Number of people suggesting the change
1	Use brighter colours to make the leaflet more appealing. Also use colour to highlight some of the more important sections.	14
2	Include the information on ‘samples’ on a separate sheet in the black folder “... <i>it seems quite a specific thing to have on here where everything else seems quite general.</i> ” Present the information on the breath test separately as the needle might frighten the person.	10
3	Provide the information on the Mental Health Act on a separate sheet with more details to give the person clarity of the situation.	8
4	Use more bold type to show important information on the leaflet.	6
5	Ordering of the information: (1) Provide a schedule of what will happen (the steps they will go through) when someone enters custody and in what order; (2) Change the order to show the right to speak to a solicitor before any mention of the interview. Recommendation that information is provided in the following order: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booked in • You get given your rights • You ask for a solicitor • While you’re waiting you are put in a cell • When the police are ready to deal with you they will call the solicitor • The solicitor will receive disclosure from the police • You then speak with the solicitor who will give you advice about what you should do in your interview and then you’ll be interviewed. 	5
6	Laminate the ‘rights and entitlements’ leaflets.	4
7	Provide information in Widgit symbols for the person when they are first arrested. For example, cards could be provided with key information such as “ <i>calm down... sit down</i> ” for the police officer to show the detained person.	4
8	Present additional information (that in the black folder, currently A4) on A5 sized paper.	4
9	The section on special times needs to be re-visited in consultation with other members of the CJS, or perhaps omitted as it is confusing for the detained person and as they are unlikely to see the Codes of Practice they may make the wrong decision not to consult with a solicitor. Change the name of the special times section to make it clearer as to what this term means.	3
10	Change the sign for medical help or colour it in green to avoid a	3

	religious interpretation.	
11	The section on the breath test should be re-worded to say “ <i>you cannot delay the procedure in order to wait for a solicitor</i> ” OR “ <i>the police aren’t obliged to delay the procedure, to allow you to speak to a solicitor.</i> ” It should be clearer that they can talk to a solicitor before agreeing to give a sample. Reword to say “ <i>the police will not delay taking a sample in order for the detainee to see a solicitor.</i> ”	3
12	Include the reason for arrest using Widgit Symbols on a separate accompanying sheet.	3
13	Use photographs as well as symbols.	3
14	Recommends that the caution recorded in the ‘Your Rights’ section is looked at again and re-presented including more information about each stage that can then be used as a basis for the verbal explanation. Emphasise the final section of the caution so that the detained person is aware of the implications of anything they say whilst in custody.	2
15	Recommends using different coloured paper explaining that ‘ <i>buff colour is... more accessible for people who have dyslexia issues.</i> ’	2
16	Provide the information via an ICT device so that the person can hear the information and choose the section they want to find out more about.	2
17	Make the symbol for the High Commission, embassy or consulate easier to understand.	2
18	More clarity (differentiation) needed between the symbols for solicitor and judge.	2
19	Change the presentation of the person who is sick as the thunderbolts are ‘ <i>a bit odd.</i> ’	1
20	The information on the phone call is ‘ <i>technically wrong because you are entitled to have someone notified if you are arrested but you are not entitled to a phone call.</i> ’	1
21	Reconsider the symbol for the Appropriate Adult, currently it looks as though one of the people is a child.	1
22	It should show that a doctor would take the blood sample.	1
23	Revise the symbol for the right to have an interpreter.	1
24	Replace the word ‘see’ the solicitor to ‘talk’ as this clarifies that they can speak to them and get advice from them on the phone.	1
25	Reword the food section to say ‘try to ensure you have 3 meals a day.’	1
26	Change the fresh air statement to say ‘you may be allowed outside for fresh air each day.’	1
27	The final symbol for time should say 96 hours so that the detained person does not think they can be detained indefinitely.	1
28	Correct the complaints section to read ‘wrongly’ in place of ‘wrong’.	1
29	Present the Codes of Practice in Widgit format.	1
30	Provide the leaflets in a variety of languages.	1

31	Include a statement on the no smoking policy.	1
32	Include additional separate sheet that explains women can ask for <i>"sanitary towels and washing facilities."</i>	1
33	Include a statement that explains they will be given regular updates on progress e.g. every 2 hours.	1
34	Change to A4 format.	1
35	Integrate Widgit information into current rights and entitlements leaflet.	1
36	Include information for those with religious beliefs such as meeting the need to pray at specific times, providing a prayer mat and any relevant literature.	1
37	Use bullet points to make the information clearer.	1

Summary of key findings

Overall, the main findings of the pilot implementation of the Widgit Symbol custody sheets can be summarised as follows:

1. The total number of Widgit Symbol rights and entitlements leaflets given out to people entering custody was lower (3.8%) than would be expected based on the average numbers of young and vulnerable people with LDD in the CJS (20-30%; Jacobsen, 2008);
2. Of those given the sheets (n=27), eight were aged under eighteen, most (23) were male and of White British ethnic origin (25);
3. Only three detainees were also shown some of the additional Widgit information sheets from the black folder, all relating to health issues;
4. The most commonly mentioned reasons for giving the Widgit leaflet to those entering custody were depression and self-harm, other mental health difficulties, substance abuse, and dyslexia / difficulties reading and writing;
5. Overwhelmingly, the response to the Widgit symbol sheets from custody personnel involved in the pilot, as well as other stakeholders both with and without direct experience of the CJS, was positive;
6. Most interviewees thought that the sheets were a good idea because they helped to make information more accessible for those who needed this;
7. Custody personnel mentioned that the use of the sheets helps to provide a more holistic, professional and robust approach to dealing with offenders while in custody;
8. Many participants felt that the sheets would be useful for a wide range of people entering custody;
9. More people than those giving the opposite view felt that the sheets should be given to everyone entering custody;

10. Some participants (a minority), felt that the sheets could be interpreted as insulting and unhelpful by some people entering custody;
11. Many participants highlighted the importance of consistency in where and how the Widgit sheets might be used, for example, in all custody centres and also across different areas of the CJS (in the courts, in prison, within the probation service);
12. Helpful suggestions were provided for improving the sheets should they be used more widely in the future including more use of colour and bold type, and showing a clearer sequence of events;
13. Most custody personnel felt that the best way of introducing the sheets to custody centres would be via verbal briefings and face-to-face training;
14. Such training should emphasise the reasons for using Widgit symbols and the fact that a pilot implementation has already taken place, with positive outcomes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, it is clear from the feedback gained about the pilot implementation of Widgit Symbol sheets in custody that the response from custody personnel was mostly positive. Custody personnel felt that the sheets had benefits both for the person coming into custody, as well as for the custody teams. In relation to the person coming into custody, the police mostly felt that the Widgit Symbol leaflets could have a place within standard procedures and practices to support the detained person with their understanding of their rights. It was widely acknowledged that the CJS can be a frightening, intimidating, confusing and stressful place and that many people coming into custody can be considered vulnerable in some way. Therefore, to have the sheets available as a helpful tool to explain jargon was seen as potentially beneficial. It was also acknowledged by fourteen of the participants that individuals with ASD may be particularly vulnerable within the CJS; nevertheless, a majority of those interviewed suggested that the Widgit Symbol sheets could be used for many people entering custody (not just those with ASD) and that they did not foresee problems in giving the sheets to everyone entering custody.

In relation to the benefits for custody teams, the main view expressed was that having the sheets available as one of the tools for personnel within custody centres, would enable the police to provide a professional and robust service, where individual needs were appropriately taken into account. Many interviewees also suggested that the sheets were a helpful tool not only for custody personnel but for others involved in supporting the detained person e.g. Appropriate Adults, health professionals. It is important to note that some interviewees discussed that the Widgit Symbol sheets should not be seen as a replacement for verbal interaction and support with helping the detained person to understand what was happening. This is very much in line with the (admittedly limited) evidence on the presentation of different formats of information for people with LDD noted in the Introduction (Zentel et al., 2007) where text + symbols + speech was the most effective combination for supporting comprehension. Moreover, many respondents felt that the sheets could be used more widely within the CJS, including in court, as part of a consistent approach to the presentation of information. Indeed, the need for information to be up-to-date and consistently presented was emphasized by many respondents. Overall, given that staff attitudes towards any new initiative or suggested change are vital for any initiative to work (e.g. Fullan, 2007) it is notable that the views of those involved in the pilot were mostly very positive. This provides a very encouraging basis for further developing and implementing this approach in the future.

As with any implementation or intervention, there were also some reservations expressed by some participants about the practical implications of using the Widgit Symbol custody sheets. These concerns included giving out too much paper which could then be ignored, and (more seriously) potentially risking the establishment of a respectful relationship with the detained person because they may feel that the symbol-based information is insulting. Certainly, the research literature (although limited) suggests that symbol-based information may only be useful for those who have some previous experience of using symbol-based systems (Poncelas and Murphy, 2007) and so it is likely that not all those with LDD, or who may be considered vulnerable in some way, would be able to better understand the symbol-based materials (compared to the 'standard' version). Nevertheless, the fact that there is simplified text to accompany the symbols and that many participants felt that the Widgit Symbol version of the rights and entitlements leaflet was friendlier, more succinct and straightforward, suggests that there could be an important role to play for more accessible information of this kind in custody.

It is noticeable that only a small number of the sheets were given out during the pilot period relative to the likely numbers of those with LDD coming through custody (Jacobson, 2008). It was agreed that the use of the Widgit Symbol sheets would be discretionary during the project and this was important for establishing initial acceptance of the idea. However, in line with discussions in the literature (HMIP, 2014; Chown, 2010; Bradley, 2009; Myers, 2004) eighteen participants emphasised that it can be very difficult to identify people with disabilities coming into custody and this may explain the low number that were given to people during the pilot. The fact that in the view of the participants LDD can be hidden would make it more difficult to decide who should receive the leaflets (unless the detained person was a juvenile in which case this decision was clearer to make). Wider discussions about inclusive practices in society (e.g. Taket et al., 2013) highlight the importance of changing the environment, including the attitudes and expectations of people involved in any system or context, to better meet individual needs rather than tailoring approaches according to individual needs. This may not be feasible or appropriate in all cases but is an important message to consider in this context.

Finally, this pilot project was small-scale and focused on the perceptions of a range of stakeholders both within and outside the CJS. Offenders' views were not sought during the pilot implementation and the interactions between custody personnel and detainees were not observed. Consequently, we do not know from this pilot project to what extent the use of the Widgit Symbol sheets made a difference to those receiving them in custody. There was some suggestion from two of the detainees who received the sheets that they appreciated the accessible format, although one detained person said that the symbols did not really explain his

rights. Clearly, there is the need to conduct a more in-depth investigation to explore the responses of those in custody to the use of the sheets.

Taking these factors into account, our recommendations based on the views of the different stakeholders involved in this pilot implementation project are as follows:

Recommendations

Further development of the sheets

1. The Widgit Symbol custody sheet development team should carefully consider the list of suggestions for improvements or changes to the current version to see which, if any, are reasonable to implement;
2. Any revised versions of the materials as a result of the feedback from this pilot implementation could be checked with the teams involved in the pilot to seek their views;

Further use of the Widgit Symbol custody sheets

3. Following any revisions to the Widgit symbol materials, a wider implementation of the sheets could be carried out across all custody centres under the jurisdiction of Hampshire Constabulary;
4. If such a wider implementation took place, custody teams should be briefed verbally via face-to-face training sessions about (i) the purpose and rationale for the sheets (ii) how the sheets should be used (with differentiation made between the initial rights and entitlements leaflet and the supplementary sheets in the folder) (iii) the evidence base so far about the use of the sheets and (iv) the importance of providing a professional service to all those entering custody;
5. During such an implementation, the use of the Widgit Symbol sheets would need to be endorsed by senior personnel within Hampshire Constabulary and the use of the sheets mandated for all persons entering custody;
6. Training or awareness raising regarding any wider implementation of the sheets should include other personnel who regularly come into contact with people detained in custody such as Appropriate Adults, social workers, health professionals, and solicitors;
7. Any wider implementation should be appropriately and independently evaluated, including, if possible, obtaining feedback (directly or via observation) of detained persons;
8. Any wider implementation should consider whether there is scope to extend the use and display of symbol-based information within other contexts of the CJS (such as information posters within custody centres; information immediately following arrest; information available in court).

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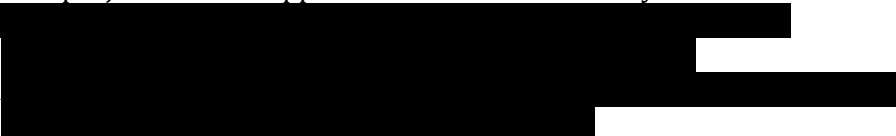
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Briefing sheet for custody staff






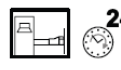








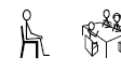

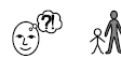


The Widgit Symbol Custody Sheet Pilot Project: Briefing sheet

What is this pilot project?	Information given to people in custody can be difficult for some people to understand and this can impact on their access to justice and appropriate services. We are trying out a new way of presenting this information that may be easier to read and understand; this new information is a <i>supplement</i> to the existing 'rights and entitlements' leaflet and not a replacement for it. This supplementary information uses printed sheets of paper with communication symbols and a small amount of words ['Widgit Symbol Custody Sheets']. The research is designed to find out what people think about these new Widgit Symbol Custody Sheets. Thanks for your help with this.
Who is involved in the project?	Autism Hampshire has been working with Widgit (communication specialists) and Hampshire Constabulary to design the information. The University of Southampton are independently evaluating the pilot project.
What are you being asked to do?	<p>Step 1: For four full shift patterns starting from Monday 11th August 2014 please use the 'Summary rights and entitlements Widgit Symbol leaflet' with <u>anyone</u> who you think may be vulnerable or have difficulties communicating and understanding. This could be because they have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a learning disability - a particular condition or difficulty (e.g. autism, ADHD, Asperger Syndrome, personality disorder) - mental health difficulties - not had access to a formal education <p>This is not an exhaustive list; there may be other reasons why detainees might find it difficult to read the standard rights and entitlements leaflet. You should use your discretion about who you think might find the Widgit Symbol sheets useful. You <u>must</u> give out the standard rights and entitlements leaflet as well as the Widgit Symbol version.</p> <p>Step 2: There is additional information available in the Widgit Symbol format that you can use if you think this might be helpful or necessary. This information is provided in the black folder with the Widgit Symbol Custody Sheet cover.</p> <p>Step 3: <u>Every time</u> you use any of the Widgit Symbol custody sheets, please make a note of the date, custody record number, and the sheets used on the Widgit Symbol Custody Sheet log (supplied).</p>
Feedback	The research team at the University [Dr Sarah Parsons & Dr Gina Sherwood] would like your feedback about the Widgit Symbol Custody sheets. Gina or Sarah will visit the custody centre after the pilot to ask whether you are willing to provide feedback. You do not have to do this. If you do, this will be a brief conversation lasting about 20 minutes.
Contact information	<p>This project has the support of Chief Constable Andy Marsh.</p> <p></p> <p>You can also contact Dr Sarah Parsons at the University: s.j.parsons@soton.ac.uk or telephone: 023 8059 2977</p>

Appendix 3: The Widgit Symbol rights and entitlements leaflet

<p>Support</p> <p> You can have an interpreter if you do not speak English.</p> <p> You can have a British Sign Language English interpreter to help you if you are deaf or have difficulty speaking.</p> <p> If you are not British you can contact your High Commission, embassy or consulate.</p> <p> An appropriate adult will help you with police procedures.</p>	<p>Breath Test</p> <p> If you have been arrested for a drink-driving offence, you will have to give a breath blood or urine sample.</p> <p> You do not need to see a solicitor before giving a sample.</p> <p>Mental Health Act</p> <p> The police can detain you under the Mental Health Act. This does not mean you have been arrested.</p> <p> If you are detained under the Mental Health Act, you must be seen by a doctor for assessment.</p>	<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;">  <p>Know your rights in custody</p> </div> <p> The police must tell you about the offence they think you have committed and why you are arrested and detained.</p> <p> You can speak to a solicitor free of charge.</p> <p> You can tell someone you have been arrested.</p> <p> You can read the police Codes of Practice.</p> <p> You can receive free medical help.</p> <p> You can ask questions anytime.</p>
<p>Special Times</p> <p> Sometimes the police need to talk to you before you see a solicitor...</p> <p> ...you can read more about this in paragraph 6.6 Code C of the Codes of Practice.</p> <p>Independent Custody Visitor</p> <p> You may be visited by an independent custody visitor. They check you are being looked after properly.</p>	<p>Complaints</p> <p> If you think you are being treated wrong, you can complain.</p> <p> You can ask to speak to a police officer of a higher rank to make a complaint.</p> <p> You can also complain to the Independent Police Complaints Commission, your solicitor or MP.</p>	

Adobe F

<p>Your Rights</p> <p> If you are asked questions about a suspected offence...</p> <p> ...you do not have to say anything. But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something you later rely on in court.</p> <p> Anything you do say may be given in evidence.</p>	<p>How you should be treated in the police station...</p> <p> You can see a medical professional if you are unwell.</p> <p> You can make a phonecall to family or friends.</p>	<p>Time</p> <p> 24 You can be detained up to 24 hours.</p> <p> 36 A police superintendent or court may decide you have to stay upto 36 hours.</p> <p> ? After 36 hours you must be charged or the court must decide whether you need to stay longer.</p>
<p>Solicitor</p> <p> You should be allowed to speak to a solicitor before being interviewed.</p> <p> The police custody officer will help you arrange to see a solicitor.</p> <p> You can talk to your solicitor in private and they can come to your interview.</p>	<p> You should have your own cell that is clean, comfortable and safe.</p> <p> If your clothes are taken, you will be given other clothes to wear.</p> <p> 3x You should be given three meals a day and drinks.</p>	<p>Interview</p> <p> The interview room should be comfortable and you should be able to sit down.</p> <p> Police officers should introduce themselves before interviewing you.</p> <p> If you have difficulty communicating you can have an 'appropriate adult' to help you.</p>
<p>Codes of Practice</p> <p> The Codes of Practice are rules that tell you what the police can or can't do while you are at the station.</p>	<p> You should be allowed outside for fresh air each day.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>This resource was developed by Widgit Software in partnership with Autism Hampshire and Hampshire Constabulary.</p> <p>Widgit Symbols © Widgit Software 2002 - 2014 www.widgit.com</p> </div>

Appendix 4: List of additional sheets included in black folder

- Booking In
- Fingerprints
- Forensic examination
- Health questions
- If you are ill
- Interview phrases
- Know your rights
- Making a phone call
- People working in custody
- Strip search
- The nurse
- Waiting
- What happens in custody
- Your DNA
- Your property

Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview for feedback from custody personnel

We are interested in your views about the Widgit Symbol Custody sheets and whether you have used them in the past month. We are particularly interested in hearing your feedback about what you felt worked well and what could have worked better. If we were to roll this out across Hampshire, what kinds of things would you advise? [Check informed consent and ask for signature on consent form; if audio-recording not agreed to then use spaces below to make notes].

Question	Response
1. How did you hear about the Widgit Symbol pilot project? - From whom? - In what way(s) was communication made?	[for notes if not willing to be audio-recorded]
2. Was enough information provided about the pilot for you to use the sheets? - clarity of purpose? - could this be done better / differently?	
3. Thinking about the past month, where and how have you used the Widgit Symbol sheets? - with whom? - which shift(s)? - reasons for doing this? - which sheets in particular?	
4. What difference, if any, did you think using the Widgit Symbol sheets made? - for the detainee? - for you? [Prompts re communication and engagement if needed]	
5. From a practical point of view, were the sheets: - easy to use (available)? - in the right format (size of leaflet; too much too little information)? - are there ways of doing this better / differently?	
6. Is there any information missing that it would be useful to include?	

Appendix 6: Pro forma for custody sheet information

The Widgit Symbol Custody Sheet Pilot Project

Custody record number:	Date:	Time:
Age:	Gender:	Ethnicity:
Did an Appropriate Adult attend?	Yes / No	
Any additional information (e.g. health needs, learning needs, disability, reason(s) why sheets were given)?		
Any additional sheets used apart from initial Rights & Entitlements?	Yes / No	
If yes, is there any information available about which sheets were used?		
Any other comments or notes?		

Appendix 7: Focus group agenda (accessible version)

Date: 18th June 2014

Time: 4pm

**Location: Autism Hampshire, 22 Midanbury Lane, Bitterne Park,
Southampton, Hampshire, SO18 4HP**

There will be food and drinks available.

This is what we will do:



(1) Sarah and Gina from the University will start by welcoming everyone and explaining the project.

(2) Everyone in the room will say their name and where they work or live.

(3) We will all agree the rules about how to listen to and respect each other.

(4) Sarah and Gina will split the big group into two smaller groups:

- **Group 1 will look at information A and**
- **Group 2 will look at information B.**

(5) Both groups will answer the questions:

- a. **What do you like about how the information is presented?**
- b. **What do you not like about how the information is presented?**
- c. **Is there a better or different way of presenting the information?**

(6) The groups will then swap so that:

- **Group 1 will look at information B and**
- **Group 2 will look at information A.**

(7) Both groups will answer the questions:

- a. **What do you like about how the information is presented?**
- b. **What do you not like about how the information is presented?**
- c. **Is there a better or different way of presenting the information?**

(8) Group 1 and Group 2 will come back together to form one big group.

(9) Sarah and Gina will tell the big group what Group 1 said and what Group 2 said.

(10) Everyone in the group will have a chance to say a final thing about the information they have seen.

(11) Sarah and Gina will end the discussion and thank everyone for their time.

The session is finished and everyone can go home!

Appendix 8: Semi-structured interview schedule (Senior CJS personnel example)

Question	Response
<p>1. Can you tell us about the extent to which your role brings you into contact with vulnerable adults and young people who are in custody?</p>	<p>[for notes if permission to audio-record is not granted]</p>
<p>2. What, if any, particular challenges do you experience in your role in relation to meeting the information needs of vulnerable adults and young people?</p>	
<p>3. If you do not experience any direct challenges yourself in this regard, what are your perceptions about how the information needs of vulnerable adults and young people are met within the criminal justice system?</p>	
<p>4. What do you perceive or experience as the outcomes of not meeting information needs effectively for vulnerable adults and young people?</p>	
<p>5. In what ways can the information needs of vulnerable adults and young people be more effectively met within the criminal justice system?</p>	
<p>6. This pilot project has focused on the information that people receive in custody. Autism Hampshire in conjunction with Widgit and Hampshire Constabulary have devised some more accessible information [show examples].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are your initial thoughts about this initiative? - Do you see this as potentially meeting the information needs of some people in custody more effectively than at present? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Is this something that has the potential to be rolled out more widely? - Do you think there are any drawbacks or disadvantages of these formats from the perspective of your role in the justice system? - Do you have any advice on how they could be improved?	
<p>7. Is there anything else you think we should know about supporting vulnerable adults and young people in the criminal justice system?</p>	

Appendix 9a: Participant Information Sheet (adult participants; focus groups)

The Widgit Symbol Custody Sheet Pilot Project

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

Information given to people in custody can be difficult for some people to understand and this can influence their access to justice and appropriate services. We are trying out a new way of presenting this information that may be easier to read and understand. This new way uses printed sheets of paper with communication symbols and a small amount of words ['Widgit Symbol Custody Sheets']. The research is designed to find out what people think about these new Widgit Symbol Custody Sheets.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been asked whether you would like to take part because you have a particular role or interest in this area. This could be because you are:

- a police officer who might give the Widgit Symbol sheets to someone in custody;
- an Appropriate Adult who may use the sheets to support someone in custody;
- a family member of someone with autism who is interested in improving how information is communicated;
- a senior professional in the criminal justice system who may meet

vulnerable adults and young people as part of your work.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You have been invited to take part in a focus group. This is a group of about 6-10 people who will meet to share their views about the Widgit Symbol custody information.

The focus group will last for about 1.5 hours and we will let you know the time and location well in advance. We will pay for any transport costs and also provide refreshments.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There may not be any direct benefit to you although as someone who works in this area, or supports someone who may find it difficult to communicate, you may be interested in what we find out.

There could be a direct benefit to the people who receive the Widgit Symbol sheets in custody. This is because the information may be easier to understand and this may reduce their concerns or anxiety.

Are there any risks involved?

Any risk is very small and no different from your everyday life. There may be aspects of the project or discussion that you feel strongly about; it is entirely up to you how much you are willing and able to share with the research team about your experiences and views.

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes absolutely. We will not use your name in any writing we do about this project, nor say where you work or live.

Hampshire Constabulary will know which custody centres are taking part in this project but we will not link specific comments or experiences to particular locations or individuals. The custody centres will not be named in the project report.

All data is stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and on secure password-protected University computers.

If you are taking part in a focus group then obviously the other participants in the group will know who you are and so you cannot be completely anonymous. However, we will ensure that no-one is named or identified in the research report,

and we will not reveal your identity to anyone outside the research team.

What happens if I change my mind?

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you can change your mind, without giving a reason, at any point up to when we analyse the data.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you should contact Professor Tony Kelly who is Head of Southampton Education School: A.Kelly@soton.ac.uk or 023 8059 3351.

Alternatively you can contact the Head of Research Governance: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk or 023 8059 5058.

Where can I get more information?

Please do not hesitate to contact Dr Sarah Parsons if you have any queries or would like to discuss further:

S.J.Parsons@soton.ac.uk or 023 8059 2977.

With many thanks for your time and interest in the project.

Dr Sarah Parsons

and Dr Gina Sherwood

Making information easier to read

This is a leaflet about a project to try to make information easier to read if someone gets into trouble with the police.

We are asking you to take part because you have Autism or Asperger Syndrome.

We are NOT asking you because we think you will be in trouble with the police.

When people get in trouble with the police they are given information to read.

This information can be difficult to understand.

This project is trying out a new way to give this information.

We would like to know what you think about the information:

- **Is it clear?**
- **Is it helpful?**
- **Are there ways we can make it clearer?**



Sarah and Gina from the University of Southampton will be asking you about the information.

We will meet at Autism Hampshire, 22 Midanbury Lane, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire SO18 4HP.

Your Mum or Dad will come with you.

Other people with Autism will be there too.

There will be about 6 to 10 people in the room at the same time.

We will not use your name when we write about what you tell us.

You can change your mind about taking part at any time.

You do not have to tell us what you think about the information if you do not want to.

If you have any questions please contact Sarah at the University of Southampton



023 8059 2977



S.J.Parsons@soton.ac.uk



Appendix 10a: Consent form for adult participants

Consent form for adult participants (*version 1.3*)

Study title: *The Widgit Symbol Custody Sheet Pilot Project*

Researcher(s) name: Dr Sarah Parsons & Dr Gina Sherwood

Ethics reference: 9662

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (v1.2 dated 18th July 2014) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I agree to take part in this research project and for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.

I agree that if I take part in an interview or focus group this will be audio-recorded for data analysis.

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected.

I understand that my responses will be anonymised in reports of the research

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Name of participant (print name):

Signature of participant:

Date:

Signature of researcher:

Date:

Appendix 10b: Assent form for young people

Making information easier to read project

Do you want to take part in this project?

Your name:

<i>(you can put a tick or a mark under yes or no to show if you agree or not)</i>	Yes	No
I have been given information about the project		
I know that I will take part in a group discussion with my Mum and / or Dad		
I know that I do not have to take part if I do not want to		
I know that I can stop at any time without giving a reason		
I know that the discussion will be recorded with a digital voice recorder		
I know that my name will not be included in any writing about the project		

Date:

Signed or completed by:

Or witnessed by: