



**REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, ADULT SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION**

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION POLICY

Purpose of the Report

1. The report is to request approval for an Accessible Communication Policy, as required by the Accessible Information Standard.

Information and Advice

2. The Accessible Information Standard was approved on the 24th June 2015. All organisations that provide NHS or adult social care must follow the accessible information standard by law. The legal context is set out in the Equality Act 2010, the Care Act 2014 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012, which lists the organisations which must have regard to the standard. Organisations must follow the standard in full by 31st July 2016. However there were more immediate deadlines for action in early April.
3. The aim of the accessible information standard is to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information that they can access and understand, and any communication support that they need. This is to ensure that they are not put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with people who are not disabled, when accessing NHS or adult social services.
4. This includes accessible information and communication support to enable individuals to:
 - make decisions about their health and wellbeing, and about their care and treatment;
 - self-manage conditions;
 - access services appropriately and independently; and
 - make choices about treatments and procedures including the provision or withholding of consent.
5. As part of the accessible information standard, organisations that provide NHS or adult social care must do five things. They must:
 - ask people if they have any information or communication needs, and find out how to meet their needs
 - record those needs clearly and in a set way – ensuring that they are ‘highly visible’ on either electronic or paper records

- highlight or flag the person's file or notes so it is clear that they have information or communication needs and how to meet those needs – again this is suggested as electronic flags or alerts, where appropriate
 - share information about people's information and communication needs with other providers of NHS and adult social care, when they have consent or permission to do so – as part of existing data-sharing processes, and routine referral, discharge and handover processes
 - take steps to ensure that people receive information which they can access and understand, and receive communication support if they need it.
6. The Standard must be implemented and adhered to by all providers of NHS and publicly-funded adult social care, as well as suppliers of IT systems, software and hardware to health and adult social care organisations and providers.
 7. Although commissioners are exempt from implementing the Standard themselves, they must ensure that their actions, especially through contracting and performance-management arrangements (including incentivisation and penalisation), enable and support provider organisations from which they commission services to implement and comply with the requirements of the Standard.
 8. The scope of the Standard extends to individuals (patients and service users, and where appropriate the parents and carers of patients and service users) who have information and /or communication support needs which are related to or caused by a disability, impairment or sensory loss. This includes needs for: information in 'non-standard', alternative or specific formats; use of specific or alternative contact methods; arrangement of support from a communication professional (for example a deafblind manual interpreter or British Sign Language interpreter); and support to communicate in a different or particular way or to use communication aids (for example to lipread or use a hearing aid).
 9. The Standard is, therefore, of particular relevance to individuals who have sensory loss (including people who are blind, deaf or deafblind) and people who have a learning disability. However, it will also support people who have other communication disabilities such as aphasia, autism or a mental health condition which affects their ability to communicate. Individuals with any form or type of disability (or impairment) which affects their ability to read or receive information, to understand information, and/or to communicate, are within the scope of this standard.
 10. The Standard is primarily focused on the provision of adult social care services and as such was discussed at the Adult Social Care and Health Committee in April 2016. This report included the requirement for the Council to produce and publish an Accessible Communication policy by July 31st 2016. The draft policy is attached as Appendix A.
 11. The Adult Social Care and Health Committee also approved establishment of a temporary Project Manager post to ensure and support implementation of the Standard. This post has now been recruited to and the post-holder has started in the role. One of the tasks of the Project Manager will be to produce staff guidance to support the Council's policy.

12. The Project Manager is based within the Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection department but will be required to work with teams across the Council to ensure the Standard is fully implemented, as well as with external organisations such as health. Although the focus is on adult social care services, it is expected that the principles of the Standard will be adopted across the Council as a whole in due course as they represent good practice in relation to the accessibility of information for all.

Other Options Considered

13. The Standard is required to be implemented by law.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

14. One of the requirements of the Standard is for relevant organisations to produce and publish an Accessible Communication policy.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

16. The Standard may require some changes and new provisions for how information is presented and provided. This requirement will become clearer as the Council implements the Standard in full. There is a small communications budget within Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection which will be used for any initial costs. If a larger budget is required, as the implementation work progresses, this will be subject to future committee approval.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

17. The legal context for the Standard is set out in the Equality Act 2010. The aim of the Standard is to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information that they can access and understand, and any communication support that they need. This is to ensure that they are not put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with people who are not disabled, when accessing NHS or adult social services.

Implications for Service Users

18. Implementation of the Standard is intended to improve the accessibility of information for people who need to use social care and health services. It will support people to make decisions and choices about their care and treatment, and to access services independently.

Ways of Working Implications

19. The Policy and related staff guidance will support staff to ensure that the Standard is implemented in practice.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Committee approves the Accessible Communication Policy.

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Constitutional Comments (LMc 28/06/16)

The recommendations in the report fall within the Terms of Reference of the Policy Committee.

Financial Comments (KAS 04/07/2016)

The financial implications are contained within paragraph 16 of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Approval of temporary post to support implementation of the accessible information standard – Adult Social Care and Health Committee report, 18th April 2016

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All