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Title: Accessible Communication Policy

Aim / Summary: The aim of the Accessible Communication Policy 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 persons who are not disabled, when accessing NHS or adult social services.

Document type (please choose one)

Policy	X	Guidance	
Strategy		Procedure	

Approved by:

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Date approved:

Proposed review date:

July 2017

Subject Areas (choose all relevant)

About the Council		Older people	X
Births, Deaths, Marriages		Parking	
Business		Recycling and Waste	
Children and Families		Roads	
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Please include any supporting documents

1.

2.

3.

Review date	Amendments



Accessible Communication Policy

Context

1. The Accessible Information Standard was agreed by NHS England on 24 June 2015. All organisations that provide NHS or adult social care must follow the Accessible Information Standard. The legal context is set out in the Equality Act 2010, the Care Act 2014 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
2. 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 persons who are not disabled, when accessing NHS or adult social services.
3. Nottinghamshire County Council Adult Social Care and Health Committee agreed at their meeting on 18 April 2016 that the Council will develop and implement an Accessible Communication Policy to ensure the Accessible Information Standard is complied with.

Scope of this policy

4. This Policy is applicable to all Nottinghamshire County Council adult social care provision.
5. 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.
6. 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).

7. 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.
8. The accessibility of health and social care websites is out of scope of the Accessible Information Standard. However, the Standard remains relevant in circumstances where a health or social care professional would usually refer a patient or service user (or their carer) to a website for information. In these instances, it will be the duty of the professional and the County Council, to verify that the website is accessible to the individual and, if it is not, to provide or make the information available in another way.

Principles and Commitments

9. Accessible information and communication support will be provided 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;
 - make choices about treatments and procedures including the provision or withholding of consent.
10. In providing adult social care services Nottinghamshire County Council will ensure that officers:
 - 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.

Key actions to meet the commitments set out in the policy

11. The Council will develop, implement and monitor an action plan to ensure compliance with the Accessible Information Standard. The action plan will:

- ensure recording systems and relevant documentation will enable the recording of information and communication needs in line with the standard, and that these will be highly visible;
- make sure that arrangements and protocols are in place such that information about individuals' information and / or communication support needs is included as part of existing data sharing processes, and as a routine part of referral, discharge and handover ;
- arrange for guidance and procedures to be in place to enable professional communication support and information in alternative formats to be provided promptly and without unreasonable delay;
- ensure that staff awareness of policies and procedures with regards to provision of communication support and information in alternative formats is high and they are embedded as part of 'business as usual';
- ensure that contracts, frameworks and performance management arrangements reflect, enable and support implementation and compliance with the Standard by commissioned providers of adult social care.

12. This Policy will be reviewed by July 2017.