

The NHS Accessible Information Standard – how it is being implemented by Cambridgeshire County Council

The NHS Accessible Information Standard aims to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information they can access and understand and any communication support that they need.

The Standard tells organisations how they should make sure that patients, service users, carers and parents can access and understand the information they are given. This includes making sure that people get information in different formats if they need it, for example in large print, braille, easy read or via e-mail.

Also, the Standard tells organisations how they should make sure that people get any support with communication that they need, for example support from a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, have longer appointments booked, etc.

The Standard applies to all organisations that provide NHS services or publicly-funded adult social care.

As part of the Standard organisations that provide NHS services or adult social care must do five things. They must:

- 1) Ask people if they have any information or communication needs, and find out how to meet their needs.
- 2) Record those needs clearly and in a set way.
- 3) 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.
- 4) Share details 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.
- 5) Take steps to ensure that people receive information which they can access and understand, and receive communication support if they need it.

The implementation of the Standard is intended to happen in two stages:

From April 2016 organisations must:

- Identify and record information and communication needs when service users/carers first interact or register with a service.
- Identify and record information and communication needs as part of ongoing/routine interaction with the service by existing service users/carers.

By 31 July 2016 organisations must:

- Follow the Standard in full.

What the Council is doing

The Council has agreed that a standard script of questions will be used by relevant Council staff to identify an individual's information and communication support needs. These questions are:

1. Do you have any communication needs?
2. How would you like us to communicate with you?
3. What is the best way to send you information?

Relevant Council staff who may ask these questions include:

- Call advisors at the customer service contact centre who are handling a care and support enquiry.
- Reablement team staff.
- Discharge Planning team staff.
- Social care management staff as part of the assessment/re-assessment/review process.

This information will be recorded in the Council's social care database system.

Compliance with the recording and implementation of the Standard by staff will be monitored by the Adult Social Care Quality Governance and Practice Development Team.

Consent to share a service user or carer's information and/or communication support needs with other providers of NHS or adult social care shall be recorded in the case notes field.

The Council has added information about the Standard to its Adult Social Care Operational Procedures for staff and a Practitioner Factsheet for staff has been produced.

Also technical changes, related to the Standard, have been made to the Council's social care database system. These changes have been outlined in a factsheet for staff.

Adult Social Care training programmes will include a standard section about the need to communicate effectively with people and provide details of sources of help and advice.

How will the Council meet people's accessible information and/or communication support needs?

Where people's information needs or communication support can be met within a Service Team (for example producing documents in large print or communication support from Speech and Language Therapists within the Learning Disability Partnership) then this will continue.

Where people's information needs or communication support cannot be routinely met within a Service Team (for example producing documents in Braille or the need for a BSL interpreter) then this can be requested by staff using the Council's Interpretation and Translation Framework Agreement process.

Further information

For more information about the how the Council is implementing the NHS Accessible Information Standard please contact:

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