

## Policy

# Accessible Information & Communications

### Statutory Basis for Policy

**The Equality Act 2010  
Health and Social Care Act 2012  
The Care Act 2014  
NHS Accessible Information Standard 2016**

Version History				
Version number	Summary of change	Approved by	Author	Date
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## **Accessible Information & Communications Policy**

### **Introduction and background**

The Accessible Information Standard is a mandatory requirement that applies to all providers of NHS and publicly funded adult social care. This includes<sup>1</sup>:

- Providers of publicly funded Adult Social Care or services (including care homes, nursing homes and day care)
- Adult Social Care or services bodies (in their role as service providers)
- Providers of Adult Social Care from the voluntary and community or private sectors
- Providers of Public Health, including advice and information

The aim of the Standard is to establish a framework to ensure that patients and service users (and where appropriate carers and parents) who have information or communication needs relating to a disability, impairment or sensory loss receive accessible information and communication support appropriate to their needs.

In implementing the Standard, organisations are required to complete five distinct stages: Identify; Record; Flag; Share and Meet needs. From 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016 organisations must be fully compliant with all aspects of the Accessible Information Standard.

### **Statutory Basis for the policy**

Although introducing consistency and clarity, via specific requirements, the Accessible Information Standard is building upon existing legal duties which public sector bodies and all service providers are already obligated to follow, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act became law in October 2010. It replaced, and aimed to improve and strengthen, previous equalities legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Equality Act covers all of the groups that were protected by previous equality legislation, known as Protected Characteristics, one of which is disability.

The Equality Act places a legal duty on all service providers to take steps or make “reasonable adjustments” in order to avoid putting a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage when compared to a person who is not disabled. Guidance produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) states that, “Anything which is more than minor or trivial is a substantial disadvantage.” The Equality Act is explicit in including the provision of information in “an accessible format” as a ‘reasonable step’ to be taken.

The Health & Social Care Act 2012 gave the NHS Commissioning Board (or the Secretary of State) powers to prepare and publish an information standard relating to information concerning or connecting with the provision of health services or adult social care in England.

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<sup>1</sup> NHS related services not included

The Care Act 2014 also placed a duty on Local Authorities to establish and maintain a service for providing people in its area with information and advice relating to care and support for adults and support for carers. This information and advice must be accessible to, and proportionate to the needs of, those for whom it is being provided.

### **Policy Statement**

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council will:

- Ensure systems and processes are in place to consistently and routinely identify, register, flag and share service users', carers' and parents' information and communication needs, where they relate to a disability, impairment or sensory loss, as part of service user records.
- Through training and communication, ensure that Adult Social Care staff are aware of the implications of the Standard and are aware of and able to follow local processes and procedures which have been put in place to ensure:
  - A consistent approach to identification of information/ communication needs of service at first registration or interaction with their service.
  - A consistent and routine recording of information/communication needs as part of service user records.
  - Inclusion of any recorded data about individuals' information and/or communication support needs as part of existing data-sharing processes, and as a routine part of referral, discharge and handover processes.
  - Establishment and use of electronic flags or alerts, or paper-based equivalents, to indicate that an individual has a recorded information and / or communication need, and prompt staff to take appropriate action and / or trigger auto-generation of information in an accessible format / other actions such that those needs can be met.
  - Steps are taken to ensure that individuals receive information in an alternative, accessible format and any communication support which they need.
- Ensure that staff continue to follow relevant existing legal duties, including those set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 and Mental Capacity Act 2005 around the handling and processing of data.
- Implement an accessible complaints policy and ensure there are mechanisms in place for individuals to make a complaint, raise a concern or pass on feedback in alternative formats and with communication support.

- Develop a mechanism to support individuals with information and communications needs to provide feedback on their experience of services, and of receiving information in appropriate formats and / or communication support.
- Work in partnership with our local Healthwatch and voluntary and community sector organisations to facilitate the development and improvement of accessible materials and to develop approaches for individuals with information and communication needs to feedback on their experiences.
- Ensure that standard information from ASC such as leaflets are readily available in accessible formats such as large print and easy read, and continue to develop the Adult Social Care website to ensure it is as user friendly and accessible as possible.
- Work with providers of provider organisations to raise their awareness of the standard, and seek assurance from them of their compliance, including evidence of identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting of needs.
- Ensure that future commissioning and procurement processes or Adult Social Care providers enable and support implementation and compliance with this standard.