

Making health and social care information accessible

Update July 2015 – accessible information standard approved

Summary

On 24.06.15 the new ‘accessible information standard’ was approved.

All organisations that provide NHS or adult social care must follow the accessible information standard by law.

Organisations must follow the standard in full by 31.07.16, and there are some things they must do before then.

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.

The accessible information standard tells organisations how they should make sure that patients and service users, and their 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 email.

The accessible information standard also 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, deafblind manual interpreter or an advocate.

What does the accessible information standard tell organisations to do?

As part of the accessible information standard, organisations that provide NHS 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 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.
5. Take steps to ensure that people receive information which they can access and understand, and receive communication support if they need it.

Who must follow the accessible information standard?

All organisations that provide NHS or adult social care must follow the standard. This includes NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts, and GP practices. Organisations that commission (pay for and make decisions about) NHS and adult social care services must also make sure that they support the standard.

Why must organisations follow the standard?

Organisations must follow the standard by law. This is explained in [Section 250 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012](#).

More information

There is more information about the accessible information standard, including the Specification and Implementation Guidance, [on the NHS England website](#) at www.england.nhs.uk/accessibleinfo

More information, including more information in alternative formats, will be published on the NHS England website during summer and autumn 2015. Charities including [Action on Hearing Loss](#), [CHANGE](#), [Sense](#), and the [Royal National Institute of Blind people \(RNIB\)](#) will also be publishing information.

The 'Information Standards Notice' which is the formal document which tells organisations that they must follow the standard is published on the [Health and Social Care Information Centre website](#) at www.hscic.gov.uk/isce/publication/scci1605

For more information please email NHS England at england.nhs.participation@nhs.net or call 01138 253002. Or you can write to Accessible Information Standard, NHS England, 7E56, Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds, LS2 7UE.