

Accessible Information

1. Background

The Policy has been developed to incorporate The Accessible Information Standard (AIS) which aims 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 from health and care services.

The aim of the Standard is to improve the quality and safety of care received by individuals with information and communication needs, and their ability to be involved in autonomous decision-making about their health, care and wellbeing.

2. Objectives

Abbeyfield The Dales Ltd. (ATD) is committed to providing services that enhance the quality of life for older people and developing services that will meet the needs of future generations. This commitment is based on the Mission and Values of ATD. ATD will also comply with all relevant and current legislation.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Assess the needs of residents, their advocates, family and friends along with staff and volunteers in relation to accessing the information ATD produce, and the communication tools used in a format/way which they need to utilise in order that they can understand it.
- Ensure Abbeyfield complies with legislation and best practice.

3. Scope

All residents, their families, friends, advocates, staff (including bank staff), agency staff and volunteers working within the service.

4. Policy

4.1. Requirements of the Standard

From 1st August 2016 onwards, all organisations that provide NHS care and / or publicly-funded adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard.

4.1.1. Five steps of the Accessible Information Standard (AIS)

The Standard sets out a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents with a disability, impairment or sensory loss. To comply with the AIS, ATD will:

- **Ask** people if they have any information or communication needs, and find out how to meet their needs. This will be done when they first interact with the service.
- **Record** the individual's information and/or communication needs, e.g. BSL, braille, audio, email, text, easy read or large print, text phone; and how to meet them, not their disability. This will include one or more of the following:
 - Their preferred contact method
 - Their preferred information formats.

- Specific communication professional required..
- Specific communication support required.
- **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
- **Share information** about a person's information and communication needs with other health and social care providers, with the individual's consent.
- **Take action** to ensure that people receive information which they can access and understand, and receive communication support if they need it.

4.1.2. Who does the Accessible Information Standard apply to?

Individuals with information or communication support needs relating to any kind of disability, impairment or sensory loss, including (but not limited to) the following groups:

- People who are blind or have some visual loss;
- People who are deaf (have a severe hearing problem) or Deaf (have been deaf all their life) or have some hearing loss;
- People who are deafblind;
- People who have a learning disability;
- People with aphasia (difficulty with language or speech);
- People with a mental health condition which affects their ability to communicate, for example people living with dementia; and
- People with autism.

4.2. Implementing the Standard at ATD

In line with the Standard, ATD will ensure that people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss using our services:

- Are able to contact, and be contacted by, ATD services in accessible ways, for example via email or text message.
- Receive information and correspondence in formats they can read and understand, for example in audio, braille, easy read, or large print.
- Are supported by a communication professional if this is needed to support conversation, for example a British Sign Language interpreter.
- Get support from health and social care staff and organisations to communicate, for example to lip-read or use a hearing aid.

4.3. Assessment

A full and detailed assessment of the individual's information and communication needs should be carried out at the first meeting and documented in the pre-needs assessment. This will then form the basis of the residents AIS requirements, but this needs to then be incorporated using the five points of AIS into their care plan and followed through in totality.

4.4. Information Sharing - Mental Capacity and Consent

The consent of people is fundamental, not only to their care but also to the information that is held about them and to the sharing of information. Most people will be happy for their information to be shared for the purposes of their care.

When sharing information relating to an individual's communication needs, we will comply with relevant existing legal duties, including those set out in the Data Protection Act 2018 and Mental Capacity Act 2005 around the handling and processing of data. Wherever it is possible to do so, consent to the sharing of information relating to an individual's communication needs will be obtained and clearly recorded, including any limitations on that consent. We will explain what information will be shared, with whom, in what circumstances and for what purpose.

If consent to share information related to an individual's communication needs cannot be obtained, because the person lacks the capacity to make the decision, and because nobody has been formally appointed to make it for them, a decision to share information will be made in their best interests in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Whilst it is important to ensure that confidential and sensitive information is kept safe, this should not be a barrier to sharing information. There are some circumstances where the sharing of information overrides the right to confidentiality, for example where a person is at risk of serious harm.

4.5. Roles and Responsibilities

4.5.1. Staff

A staff member has the responsibility to:

- Act in such a way as to address an individual's information and communication needs;
- Ensure that the care plan has been read and understood with regard to how the communication needs are to be met;
- Report any issues and concerns to their Line Manager immediately;
- Undertake training as appropriate to assist with their role; and
- Staff must flag up any information and communication needs they have with their Manager.

4.5.2. Line Managers

A Line Manager has the responsibility to:

- Ensure that an appropriate assessment has been carried out and specific information and communication needs are identified, record these by documenting these accurately, flag any needs within the appropriate paperwork and share this with staff who will be delivering care and support, ensure that this is reviewed, and ATD are ensuring that these are continually met going forward;
- Have regular contact between themselves and the resident, their family or advocate;
- Ensure training is provided to the staff so they have a good working knowledge of the AIS;
- Complete information in the form of assessments and care plans in detail covering the five steps of AIS;
- Discuss any changes in needs with the resident, their family or advocate; and
- Cater for the information and communication needs of any staff member who identifies this with them.

4.6. Training

Training will be provided on AIS as part of the staff induction this will be in the form of an online course in conjunction with the Local Authority unless there is an identified need for an individual staff member in which case this training need will be addressed with the individual member of staff.

5. Finance, Value for Money & Social Value

N/A

6. Supported Appendices

N/A

7. Linked Policies

Equality & Diversity (LG016P)

8. Legislation/Regulation

The Accessible Information Standard 2016

The Equality Act 2010

The Care Act 2014

Mental Capacity Act 2005

Data Protection Act 2018

9. Review

Every 3 years, subject to regulatory and legislative changes.

10. Procedure/Guidance

10.1. Support with communication needs

Examples of accessible information formats and communication support include:

10.1.1. Advocate

A person who supports someone who may otherwise find it difficult to communicate or to express their point of view. Advocates can support people to make choices, ask questions and to say what they think.

10.1.2. Audio

Information recorded from speech or synthetic (computer-generated) speech onto cassette tape, CD (compact disc) or as an electronic file such as an MP3.

10.1.3. Braille

A tactile reading format used by people who are blind, deafblind or who have some visual loss. Readers use their fingers to 'read' or identify raised dots representing letters and numbers. Although originally intended (and still used) for the purpose of information being documented on paper, braille can now be used as a digital aid to conversation, with some smartphones offering braille displays. Refreshable braille displays for computers also enable braille users to read emails and documents.

10.1.4. British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreter

BSL is a visual-gestural language that is the first or preferred language of many d/Deaf people and some deafblind people; it has its own grammar and principles, which differ from English. A BSL Interpreter is a person skilled in interpreting between BSL and English. A type of communication support which may be needed by a person who is d/Deaf or deafblind.

10.1.5. Communication tool/aid

A tool, device or document used to support effective communication with a disabled person. They may be generic or specific / bespoke to an individual. They often use symbols and / or pictures. They range from a simple paper chart to complex computer-aided or electronic devices.

10.1.6. Easy read

Written information in an easy read format in which straightforward words and phrases are used supported by pictures, diagrams, symbols and / or photographs to aid understanding and to illustrate the text.

10.1.7. Hearing loop system

A hearing loop or 'audio frequency induction loop system', allows a hearing aid wearer to hear more clearly. It transmits sound in the form of a magnetic field that can be picked up directly by hearing aids switched to the loop (or T) setting. The magnetic field is provided by a cable that encloses, or is located close to, the intended listening position such as a reception desk. The loop system allows the sound of interest, for example a conversation with a receptionist, to be transmitted directly to the person using the hearing aid clearly and free of other background noise.

10.1.8. Large Print

Printed information enlarged or otherwise reformatted to be provided in a larger font size. A form of accessible information or alternative format which may be needed by a person who is blind or has some visual loss. Different font sizes are needed by different people. Note it is the font or word size which needs to be larger and not the paper size.

10.1.9. Lip Service

A way of understanding or supporting understanding of speech by visually interpreting the lip and facial movements of the speaker. Lip reading is used by some people who are d/Deaf or have some hearing loss and by some deafblind people. A person can be supported to lip read by the speaker clearly addressing the person and facing them whilst speaking, avoiding touching or covering their mouth, and ensuring conversations are held in well-lit areas.

10.1.10. Makaton

A communication system using signs, symbols and speech. There are three levels of Makaton, used according to the individual's circumstances and abilities – functional, keyword and symbol reading. Makaton may be used by people with deafblindness or a learning disability.

10.1.11. Speech-to-text-reporter (STTR)

A STTR types a verbatim (word for word) account of what is being said and the information appears on screen in real time for users to read. A transcript may be available and typed text can also be presented in alternative formats. This is a type of communication support which may be needed by a person who is d/Deaf and able to read English.

10.1.12. Translator

A person able to translate the written word into a different signed, spoken or written language. For example a sign language translator is able to translate written documents into sign language.

10.2. Improving communication skills

One of the most practical ways of reducing, although not removing, the need to produce information in alternative formats is to improve staff communication skills generally. The following 'top tips' are intended to support staff to make their information and communication more accessible and inclusive.

10.2.1. Tips for clear face-to-face communication

- Make sure you have the person's attention before trying to communicate with them. If they do not hear you, try waving or tapping them lightly on the shoulder.

- Identify yourself clearly. Say who you are and what you do – it may be more relevant to explain your reason for seeing the person rather than your job title.
- Check that you are in the best position to communicate, usually this will be facing the person, but consider whether seated or standing is more appropriate. Communication at eye level is usually easiest so if you are speaking to a wheelchair user consider sitting down if possible.
- Find a suitable place to talk, with good lighting and away from noise and distractions.
- Speak clearly and a little slower than you would do usually, but do not shout.
- Keep your face and lips visible – do not cover your mouth with a hand, your hair or clothing. If a member of staff is concerned about religious expression they should discuss this with their manager.
- Use gestures and facial expressions to support what you are saying.
- If necessary, repeat phrases, re-phrase the sentence or use simpler words or phrases.
- Use plain, direct language and avoid using figures of speech such as ‘it’s raining cats and dogs’ or euphemisms such as ‘expecting the patter of tiny feet’.
- Check if the person has understood what you are saying. Look for visual clues as well as asking if they have understood.
- Encourage people to ask questions or request further information. Ask if they would like anything in writing as a reminder or reference.
- Try different ways of getting your point across. For example writing things down, drawing or using symbols or objects to support your point..

10.2.2. Tips for printed communication

- Use a minimum font size of 12 point, preferably 14 (which is readable by a significantly greater number of people).
- Use a clear, uncluttered and sans serif font such as Arial.
- Align text to the left margin and avoid ‘justifying’ text.
- Ensure plenty of ‘white space’ on documents, especially between sections. Avoid ‘squashing’ text onto a page and, if possible, include a double-space between paragraphs
- Print on matt and not gloss paper.
- Use page numbers.
- If printing double-sided ensure that the paper is of sufficient thickness to avoid text showing through from the other side.
- Correctly format Word documents and PDFs using styles and accessibility functions / checks. Ensure a correct and consistent heading structure, and that the cursor can move throughout all text.
- Use short descriptions to explain diagrams or photographs.
- Consider making all ‘standard’ printed letters / documents ‘easier to read’ – using plain English, highlighting important information, and supporting text with diagrams, images or photographs.
- Keep track of the electronic originals of documents you print out so you can re-print in larger font or convert to an alternative format when required.

Further advice about creating accessible documents, including for users of assistive technology, has been made available as part of the suite of tools to support implementation of the Standard.

10.3. Supporting guidance

The Sightline Directory provides details of services aimed at helping blind or partially sighted people offering services such as Braille transcription, Audio transcription and Large print transcription.

<https://www.sightlinedirectory.org.uk/Listings>

Information about communication support for people with hearing loss can be found here:

<https://rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/>