



**ACCESIBLE INFORMATION
POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

ASPECTS CARE

ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION POLICY

1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 creates a duty for all service providers to take steps or make reasonable adjustments to avoid putting disabled people at a substantial disadvantage when compared to people who are not disabled. This duty is the primary legal framework for the NHS Accessible Information Standard (the AIS) which was introduced in July 2016.

The AIS is mandatory for all providers across the NHS and publicly funded adult social care services. This includes care homes, nursing homes and day centres as well as providers of adult social care from the voluntary and community or private sectors.

AIS requirements are intended to ensure that people who need to have information in a particular format and / or support to communicate because of a disability or sensory loss receive:

- information in a form that they can access and understand, and
- any support that they need to communicate with adult social care / NHS staff
- The AIS is of particular relevance to people who:
 - are blind or have some visual loss,
 - are deaf or Deaf, have some hearing loss, or are deafblind,
 - have a learning disability,
 - have aphasia,
 - have autism,
 - have a mental health condition which affects their ability to communicate.

There are five mandatory AIS requirements for meeting the information and / or communication needs of people with a disability or sensory loss:

- to identify needs

- to record needs
- to flag needs so that they are highly visible within the record
- to share information about needs
- to take steps to meet needs

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Aspects Care will implement the five mandatory AIS requirements across its adult social care services.

3. Scope

AIS requirements described in this policy apply to:

- Aspects Care staff involved in any way with adult social care services.
- any individual or body to whom the Aspects Care has delegated its authority for carrying out its adult social care duties and functions.
- anyone using Aspects Care adult social care services who has information or communication needs relating to a disability, impairment or sensory loss who is:
 - an adult in need of care and support
 - the carer of an adult in need of care and support
 - the parent of a service user under 18, for example a young person in transition.

Specific exclusions from AIS requirements are listed at Appendix 1

Aspects Care staff responsible for commissioned services which are subject to the AIS will ensure that service providers are aware of the need to comply with AIS requirements. Aspects Care staff must be able to give assurance and evidence to commissioners which demonstrate the company's compliance with the standard.

4. Legal Context

Acts and guidance of particular relevance to the AIS:

- The Equality Act 2010: section 149 Public Sector Equality Duty

- The Health and Social Care Act 2012: section 250 Powers to publish information standards
- Data Sharing Code of Practice (2011) issued by the Information Commissioner's Office under section 52 of the Data Protection Act 1998

Acts which underpin Adult Social Care functions include but are not limited to:

- The Care Act 2014
- The Mental Health Act 1983
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005

5. Requirement to identify information and communication needs

The AIS applies to all users of Aspects Care services who are:

- adults in need of care and support
- carers of adults in need of care and support
- a parent of a service user under 18, for example a young person in transition.

In some instances, both an adult in need of care and support and their carer may have particular needs for information and communication.

In most instances any information and / or communications needs will have been identified by the referring agency or individual. However, at first contact or if this is not practicable at the next interaction with the individual, the individual will be asked to identify whether they have any information and / or communication needs related to a disability or sensory loss which may have been missed or developed.

Where needs are confirmed, the individual will be asked what information format and / or communication support is required to meet those needs.

Enquiries will be directed to the individual except in exceptional circumstances where it is impracticable to do so. In these circumstances, information will be sought from someone who knows the individual well, for example a family member or carer.

It will not be assumed that an individual who had no needs at a previous contact continues to have no needs, or that identified needs remain unchanged.

Information and communication needs will be reviewed during subsequent contacts, for example when a support plan is reviewed, to ensure that information reflects current needs

6. Recording requirements

Where needs are identified, the individual's support assessment record and support plan will include:

- the type of support required
- how needs are to be met
- where information was provided by anyone other than the individual concerned, the name of the person who provided the information and the reason why.
- where relevant, confirmation that the individual has given their specific consent to communication support being provided by a family member or any other person who is not a registered communication professional.

Information and communication needs will be recorded in the support plan.

The assessment record and support plan will be amended when it is identified that information and / or communication needs have changed.

7. Records

The service user file (both electronic and paper) will highlight the identified needs and information / communication measures put in place.

8. Requirement to include recorded data about information and / or communication needs within existing data sharing processes.

Recorded data about an individual's information and/or communication support needs will be shared with other providers where this is necessary to ensure that the individual's care and support or health needs can be met. Examples of routine data sharing include but are not limited to referral or handover processes or when responsibility for meeting social care needs is transferred to another local authority.

All personal information will be shared in line with existing legislation and treated with respect in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

9. Requirement to meet information and / or communication needs

Identified needs will be met in an appropriate way and without unreasonable delay, i.e. the individual will receive:

- information in an alternative format which they are able to access, and
- the support they need to communicate with staff.

Individuals who require an interpreter or other communication professional will be offered a suitably skilled, experienced, appropriately qualified and screened professional.

If the individual wishes to receive communication support from anyone other than a professional as described above their wishes and explicit consent must be documented in their record.

10. Dissatisfaction / complaints

As a first step, the Aspects Care encourages individuals who are dissatisfied with Aspects Care's services to:

- discuss their concerns with the staff member they are dealing with or
- ask to speak to the staff member's manager instead

The Aspects Care will try to resolve concerns quickly or explain why this is not possible.

If the concern is not resolved, or if preferred, individuals may use the Aspects Care's complaints procedure to make a complaint.

Any individual who wishes to make a complaint will be provided with information about how to do so.

Information will be provided in an accessible format. Communication support will be provided if the person has identified communication needs.

11. Implementation

The requirements of this policy will be communicated:

- to staff
- to any external person or organisation authorised to carry out assessment, support planning and / or review processes on behalf of the Aspects Care.

- to providers of independent and third sector providers commissioned to provide adult social care on behalf of the Aspects Care.

12. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored through:

- manager oversight of Aspect Care's processes
- internal audit of records
- such processes as have been agreed with external persons or organisations authorised to carry out assessment, support planning and review on behalf of the Aspects Care.
- routine contract monitoring activities by commissioners.