

Accessible Information Standard

GP Services

- * The Jenner Practice
- * Queens Road Partnership
- * Deptford Surgery
- * New Cross GP Led Walk-in
- * Mornington Surgery
- * South Lewisham Health Centre
- * Sydenham Green Group Practice
- * Wells Park Practice
- * Honor Oak Group Practice
- * Hilly Fields Medical Centre
- * Rushey Green Group Practice
- * Nightingale Surgery

This report is available to download from our website, in plain text version, Large Print, and can be made available in audio versions if requested.

Please contact us for more details.

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1. Introduction

What is Healthwatch Lewisham?

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. We listen to what people like about services, and what could be improved and we share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

We have the power to ensure that people's voices are heard by the government and those running services. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

In summary - Healthwatch Lewisham is here to:

- help people find out about local care
- listen to what people think of services
- help improve the quality of services by letting those running services and the government know what people want from care.



2. Accessible Information Standard (AIS)

The aim of the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) is to ensure that people with a disability or sensory loss are given information in a way they can understand. It is now the law for the NHS and adult social care services to comply with the AIS.

The Standard specifies the responsibility of NHS providers to identify, record, flag and share information and communication support needs of people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss. ¹

What professionals have to do



1. Ask

Find out if a person has any communication or information needs and if so what they are.



2. Record

Record those needs in a clear way. This can be done on a computer or on paper.



3. Highlight

Make sure that a person's needs stand out in their records.



4. Share

Include information about a person's communication needs when sharing other information about them.



5. Act

Make sure people get information which they can use and understand.

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¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/accessibleinfo/>

² <http://www.changepeople.org/getmedia/4ad774ac-23ec-4609-b1a1-13280b07a483/CHANGE-Communication-Card-v2>

3. Strategic Drivers

In 2016, we published our report *“See Hear Now - Access to health and wellbeing services for people with sensory impairments and learning disabilities”*. The engagement for this inquiry was carried out before the formal deadline for the implementation of the NHS Accessible Information Standard (AIS) in July 2016. Key highlights included communication barriers for people with visual and hearing disabilities, and a lack of awareness and availability of sign language interpreters.

This report builds on our initial inquiry and aims to assess the implementation of the Standard by local GP surgeries.

4. Methodology

During 2017/18 we engaged with 12 GP surgeries in the borough, to establish their response to the AIS standards. The surgeries included:

- The Jenner Practice
- Queens Road Partnership
- Deptford Surgery
- New Cross GP Led Walk-in
- Mornington Surgery
- South Lewisham Health Centre
- Sydenham Green Group Practice
- Wells Park Practice
- Honor Oak Group Practice
- Hilly Fields Medical Centre
- Rushey Green Group Practice
- Nightingale Surgery

We chose to focus on these selected GPs as there was a high number of patients with sensory and learning disabilities registered at the surgeries. To ensure that our engagement was broad we also included a number of smaller practices.

The Enter and View visits to the above GP surgeries are part of a wider review looking into the implementation of the Standard in the borough, which also included Enter and View visits to University Hospital Lewisham, and engagement sessions with people affected by the Standard such as people with sight and hearing loss and people with learning disabilities.

- The Enter and View visits consisted of asking a series of questions to senior and/or front-line staff to gauge an understanding of the implementation of the Standard and the processes currently in place to support the AIS.
- Volunteers and staff that carried out the visits were trained in visual and hearing loss awareness and, where possible, the visits were supported by volunteers with learning disabilities.
- This report captures the findings and recommendations from our visits to the twelve GP surgeries. Where appropriate, the findings and recommendations are supported by engagement carried out with people with sensory and learning disabilities about their experience of local services.
- Findings from these visits can be used to support Primary Care providers to identify the challenges that patients with additional communication requirements experience in accessing services. We hope this will present an opportunity for the providers to share good practice between departments and make improvements.
- Engagement at the New Cross GP Led Walk-in centre was carried out prior to the announcement of its closure.
- For the purpose of this report, we refer to people with learning and sensory disabilities as 'disabled people'.



5. Aims & Objectives

Our objective is to evaluate the implementation of the Accessible Information Standard within the twelve surgeries, to highlight good practice and areas that need improvement and compose a list of recommendations to help improve the patient experience.

We set out to:

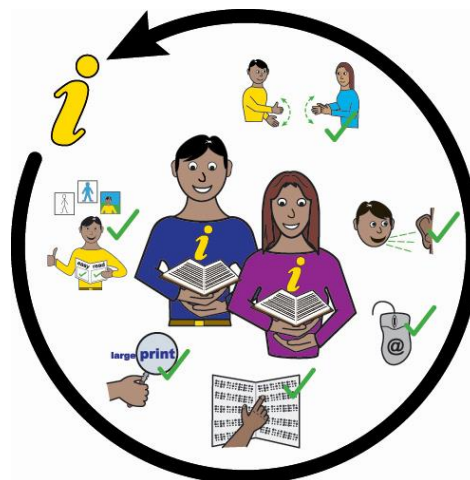
- Assess the implementation of the Accessible Information Standard.
- Use feedback and the experiences of people with sensory and learning disabilities in relation to accessibility of communication and information.
- Raise local providers' awareness of the Standard.

This report will be sent to the individual GP surgeries for their formal response and comment 20 days prior to publication and distribution.

Following this, the report will be shared with:

- Lewisham Health and Wellbeing Board
- Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Lewisham Healthier Communities Select Committee
- Healthwatch England

It will also be published on the Healthwatch Lewisham website where members of the public can view the report.



6. Findings - Accessible Information Standard, Questions to Providers

Of the twelve surgeries only eight (66.6%) were aware of the AIS Standard, three were unaware and one was unsure.

Recommendations:

1. Raising awareness about the AIS with staff and updating processes to comply with AIS requirements, would improve access for disabled patients.

The **eight** practices who said that they knew of (AIS) provided the following:

Communication support

The findings suggest that the surgeries have some tools to support communication for disabled people, however the support available is inconsistent. This could result in patients having different experiences of access depending on which surgery they are registered with.

- 2 surgeries have a hearing loop which is a system that supports people who use hearing aids.
- 3 have documentation available in large print.
- 4 said they have access to a translation service.
- 3 are producing leaflets using symbols, images and plain English text.

The findings from our engagement identified that a large barrier for disabled people was navigating their way from the reception area to the consultation rooms. Providing assistance for disabled people when they arrive at a surgery and supporting them as appropriate is key.

Recommendations:

2. Provision of alternative communication methods as requested by individuals, such as large print (18 size font), text message, email, easy-read and Sign Language interpreters for people would ensure equity of access.
3. Sign Language interpreters to be booked routinely for patients that require them, with confirmation sent to patients for their reassurance.
4. Installation of a hearing loop system would help those with hearing loss.
5. Offering assistance to people with sensory and learning disabilities to accompany them to the consultation rooms from the reception would improve patients' experience. Special emphasis on supporting disabled patients to the appointments should be made in busy waiting rooms.

Appointment times

Six GP receptionists said that they offer longer appointment times for people who require additional support because of a disability. This approach could ensure disabled people have more time to communicate with a doctor or a nurse.

Recommendations:

6. It would be beneficial for all surgeries to offer longer appointments, where appropriate, to patients who require additional communications needs.

Systems to identify and record additional communication needs

100% of surgeries told us that they record additional communication needs which are stored on their computer system. However, three surgeries told us that it was not always easy to find the information. A flagging system would help front line staff to have easier access to the information. In addition, asking patients about their communication needs would help inform patients of their eligibility to additional communication options as per the AIS.

- 7 receptionists said they asked patients about their additional communication needs.
- 1 said that this is up to the GP to ask patients about their additional communication needs.
- 4 mentioned that they did not ask patients.

Recommendations:

7. Routinely asking patients with sensory and learning disabilities if they require alternative communication methods and recording those in a set manner would ensure people's communication needs are met.
8. A flagging system to alert reception staff of patient's communication needs would improve disabled patient's access to services.

Disability awareness training

Findings from our engagement suggest that disability awareness training would improve disabled people's experience of health and social services. Many disabled people said that a big part of having a positive experience at GP practices was a result of knowledgeable staff that have disability awareness.

- 3 receptionists said that they had received training. This was provided at team meetings.
- 5 said that they had been given information to read which was produced by NHS England.
- 4 said that they had received no training.

Recommendations:

9. Provision of sight and hearing loss awareness training for front line staff would improve patient experience.

Authorised Enter and View representatives - Questionnaire for Service Providers

1. Are you aware of the Accessible Information Standard? Yes/ No/ Unsure
2. What things do you have in place to meet the Accessible Information Standard?
3. Do you ask patients and carers if they have any information or communication needs? Yes/ No/ Unsure
If Yes, how do you do this?
4. How do you record patients/clients who have special communication needs due to a disability (for example: deaf/blind/learning disability)?
5. How do you highlight a patients' file so that staff are aware of their communication needs?
6. What action do you take to meet the additional needs of these patients?
Please provide examples:
7. When you have consent do you share information about a person's needs with other NHS and adult social care providers? Yes/ No/ Unsure
8. Do you provide staff training around disability awareness issues? Yes/ No/ Unsure
If yes, how often do you offer it (refreshers)?
9. Can you provide examples of recent disability awareness training?
10. If individual staff - have you received the training? Yes/ No/ Unsure

li: Responses to our report



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Healthwatch was established in 2013 in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Within this legislation [Arrangements to be made by relevant bodies in respect of local Healthwatch Organisations Directions 2013] Healthwatch has a right to a reply within 20 working days to Reports and Recommendations submitted by Local Healthwatch to a service provider.

Report & Recommendation Response Form

Report sent to	The Queens Road Partnership
Date sent	09/05/2018 (First Received 4/6/2018? first notification not received?)
Details of report	Accessible Information Standard - GP services A research project looking into the implementation of the Accessible Information Standard through local GP surgeries in the London Borough of Lewisham. The aim of the project is to highlight good practice and areas that need improvement and compose a list of recommendations to help improve patients' experience.
Date of response provided	Response (If there is a nil response please provide an explanation for this within the statutory 20 days) 6/6/2018
General response	We endeavour to implement the Accessible Information Standard to the best of our ability and encourage training for our staff when available
1. Raising awareness about the AIS with staff and updating processes to comply with AIS requirements, would improve access for disabled patients.	This is an ongoing process and there is alertness to this , in an environment where healthcare is provided to a variety of service receivers with various needs . We aim to provide the best possible access to healthcare for disabled patients within the constraints of our resourcing and buildings. We have a member of staff now dedicated to looking at information dissemination to all patients and also specifically disabled patients.
2. Provision of alternative communication methods as requested by individuals, such as large print (18 size font), text message, email, easy-read and Sign Language interpreters for people would ensure equity of access.	We endeavour to provide alternative communication methods, if we are made aware of the need, in routine appointments. This still can often be done in more urgent situations and appointments also but may involve the patient having to wait a little longer. Technology is used to allow this to happen.
3. Sign Language interpreters to be booked routinely for patients that require them, with	This is done if required : If an appointment is booked in person this is communicated at the time. If by an advocate they are informed at the time. Text messaging can be utilised to inform them also.

confirmation sent to patients for their reassurance.

4. Installation of a hearing loop system would help those with hearing loss.

This is installed in the waiting room/ reception area. Training for staff in its use is also in the programme

5. Offering assistance to people with sensory and learning disabilities to accompany them to the consultation rooms from the reception would improve patients' experience. Special emphasis on supporting disabled patients to the appointments should be made in busy waiting rooms.

This is a reasonable approach and our staff are trained to be reasonable and will assess each presentation individually and apply assistance if noted to be required.

6. It would be beneficial for all surgeries to offer longer appointments, where appropriate, to patients who require additional communications needs.

This is done both for the sake of the patient and the doctor and later patients, if at the time of booking this is clear.

7. Routinely asking patients with sensory and learning disabilities if they require alternative communication methods and recording those in a set manner would ensure people's communication needs are met.

We endeavour to do so. The need are recorded both as an alert on the records (pop up box) and also as a READ code in the problem title.

8. A flagging system to alert reception staff of patient's communication needs would improve disabled patient's access to services.

If there is the recorded alert or the person who books the appointment points this out staff put an alert.

Recent example is staff awareness of Autistic Spectrum Disorder patients (Children especially), where an alert is sent to the doctor on their arrival so they are not kept waiting long due to their sensitiveness to loud noises etc.

9. Provision of sight and hearing loss awareness training for front line staff would improve patient experience.

Some training has been undertaken in the past but required updating but as we have been without a manager for 8 months this has been put to be reviewed with the new manager who has just started.

Signed

Name
Position



Komron Sayyah (Dr)
Administration Partner

December 2017

For office use only	
Date response received	
Within 20 days?	

Report & Recommendation Response Form

Report sent to	South Lewisham Group Practice
Date sent	09/05/2018
Details of report	<p>Accessible Information Standard - GP services</p> <p>A research project looking into the implementation of the Accessible Information Standard through local GP surgeries in the London Borough of Lewisham. The aim of the project is to highlight good practice and areas that need improvement and compose a list of recommendations to help improve patients' experience.</p>
	<p>Response</p> <p>(If there is a nil response please provide an explanation for this within the statutory 20 days)</p>
Date of response provided	05.06.18
General response	
1. Raising awareness about the AIS with staff and updating processes to comply with AIS requirements, would improve access for disabled patients.	We agree this would improve our knowledge as a service provider and welcome any additional training, posters or general information that could support us.
2. Provision of alternative communication methods as requested by individuals, such as large print (18 size font), text message, email, easy-read and Sign Language interpreters for people would ensure equity of access.	Increased font is offered to visually impaired patients whenever indicated as a preference. Staff actively invite patients to receive large print information if they identify a need. Training includes when, why and how to best offer this adaptation to assist patients.
3. Sign Language interpreters to be booked routinely for patients that require them, with confirmation sent to	We have access to British Sign interpreters, booked two weeks in advance. The cost of this service is fully supported by Lewisham CCG.

patients for their reassurance.	
4. Installation of a hearing loop system would help those with hearing loss.	We also have a hearing loop in situ and working for the benefit of patients and visitors to our premises.
5. Offering assistance to people with sensory and learning disabilities to accompany them to the consultation rooms from the reception would improve patients' experience. Special emphasis on supporting disabled patients to the appointments should be made in busy waiting rooms.	Staff actively offer assistance to patients who may require help or support from waiting room to consultation room. Visually impaired patients are invited to sit near to the
6. It would be beneficial for all surgeries to offer longer appointments, where appropriate, to patients who require additional communications needs.	We provide double appointments for patient requiring interpreting services and to support those who may find a 10 minute appointment slot challenging.
7. Routinely asking patients with sensory and learning disabilities if they require alternative communication methods and recording those in a set manner would ensure people's communication needs are met.	Staff are receiving additional training to enable this service.
8. A flagging system to alert reception staff of patient's communication needs would improve disabled patient's access to services.	We already have presenting alerts on opening a patient's record that provide additional information to assist the staff member in providing the best care.

9. Provision of sight and hearing loss awareness training for front line staff would improve patient experience.	We would value the opportunity for staff to access this training.
Signed	
Name	Dawn Lait
Position	Practice Manager

December 2017

For office use only	
Date response received	
Within 20 days?	

Report & Recommendation Response Form

Report sent to	Nightingale Surgery
Date sent	09/05/2018
Details of report	<p>Accessible Information Standard - GP services</p> <p>A research project looking into the implementation of the Accessible Information Standard through local GP surgeries in the London Borough of Lewisham. The aim of the project is to highlight good practice and areas that need improvement and compose a list of recommendations to help improve patients' experience.</p>
	<p>Response</p> <p>(If there is a nil response please provide an explanation for this within the statutory 20 days)</p>
Date of response provided	11.5.18
General response	
1. Raising awareness about the AIS with staff and updating processes to comply with AIS requirements, would improve access for disabled patients.	Agree, AIS to be discussed at next practice meeting to ensure that we improve access for disabled patients
2. Provision of alternative communication methods as requested by individuals, such as large print (18 size font), text message, email, easy-read and Sign Language interpreters for people would ensure equity of access.	Alternative communication to be made available if requested. Sign language and Interpreters are already made available and easy read information is used for patients with learning disabilities
3. Sign Language interpreters to be booked routinely for patients that require them, with confirmation sent to	Sign language interpreters are already booked, however the practice does not ensure that the patients are also emailed so this can be implemented.

patients for their reassurance.	
4. Installation of a hearing loop system would help those with hearing loss.	Loop System available
5. Offering assistance to people with sensory and learning disabilities to accompany them to the consultation rooms from the reception would improve patients' experience. Special emphasis on supporting disabled patients to the appointments should be made in busy waiting rooms.	Reception staff are all sensitive to learning and sensory disabilities and regularly accompany patients to consulting rooms and are continually encouraged to do so.
6. It would be beneficial for all surgeries to offer longer appointments, where appropriate, to patients who require additional communications needs.	Double appointments are available for patients with communication needs and reception staff are able to book double apps if and when necessary
7. Routinely asking patients with sensory and learning disabilities if they require alternative communication methods and recording those in a set manner would ensure people's communication needs are met.	To be discussed with Practice Team. Help would be grateful in accessing information in Braille.
8. A flagging system to alert reception staff of patient's communication needs would improve disabled patient's access to services.	Alerts are made available on the computer system and are used for this purpose.

9. Provision of sight and hearing loss awareness training for front line staff would improve patient experience.	On line training to be looked into and discussed at next Practice Meeting.
Signed	Mandy Ettridge
Name	Mandy Ettridge
Position	Practice Manager

December 2017

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Date response received	
Within 20 days?	

Report & Recommendation Response Form

Report sent to	Deptford Surgery
Date sent	09/05/2018
Details of report	<p>Accessible Information Standard - GP services</p> <p>A research project looking into the implementation of the Accessible Information Standard through local GP surgeries in the London Borough of Lewisham. The aim of the project is to highlight good practice and areas that need improvement and compose a list of recommendations to help improve patients' experience.</p>
	<p>Response</p> <p>(If there is a nil response please provide an explanation for this within the statutory 20 days)</p>
Date of response provided	5 th June 2018
General response	We feel that as a practice we offer a very comprehensive service to all our patients regardless of their extra needs.
1. Raising awareness about the AIS with staff and updating processes to comply with AIS requirements, would improve access for disabled patients.	Our staff are on a continuous training programme that provides for any changes regarding AIS, GDPR, chaperone training etc. We are diligent that our staff are well trained and therefore prepared for the diversity of patients' needs.
2. Provision of alternative communication methods as requested by individuals, such as large print (18 size font), text message, email, easy-read and Sign Language interpreters for people would ensure equity of access.	<p>We can provide large print leaflets if required. Text messages and e-mails are sent as a standard 14 point font. We cannot dictate how patients' receive these messages through their service providers.</p> <p>We have easy access to interpreters including BSL interpreters should a patient request this.</p>
3. Sign Language interpreters to be booked routinely for patients that require them, with confirmation sent to	<p>We will book BSL interpreters for patients at their request and we do ask patients to give us sufficient time to book the appointment.</p> <p>Once this has been booked we will send a text/e-mail confirmation to the patient. In some circumstances a letter will be sent if the patient does not have internet/mobile phone access.</p>

patients for their reassurance.	
4. Installation of a hearing loop system would help those with hearing loss.	There is a hearing loop in situ at reception.
5. Offering assistance to people with sensory and learning disabilities to accompany them to the consultation rooms from the reception would improve patients' experience. Special emphasis on supporting disabled patients to the appointments should be made in busy waiting rooms.	<p>Our receptionists are very aware of anyone needing assistance within the reception area of the surgery. We have a ramp and hand rail that leads directly into reception and once inside all consulting rooms and reception are on one level.</p> <p>Because of the size of our waiting room the staff are restricted in the amount of help they can give, but they will accommodate anyone who needs extra help to their best ability.</p>
6. It would be beneficial for all surgeries to offer longer appointments, where appropriate, to patients who require additional communications needs.	We already offer double appointments where appropriate or required.
7. Routinely asking patients with sensory and learning disabilities if they require alternative communication methods and recording those in a set manner would ensure people's communication needs are met.	Our reception team are sensitive to and aware of anyone who may need extra help and are willing to ask patients if they need extra help.
8. A flagging system to alert reception staff of patient's communication needs would improve disabled patient's access to services.	Our computer system will flag up any communication and or special needs that the patient may have to assist them with getting the best experience from their appointment with our clinicians.

9. Provision of sight and hearing loss awareness training for front line staff would improve patient experience.	As stated above our surgery staff are on a continuous rolling training course that keeps them up to date.
Signed	<i>Sunil Gupta</i>
Name	Sunil Gupta
Position	Practice Manager

December 2017

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Date response received	
Within 20 days?	

This report was produced by:

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