



LONDON ROAD SURGERY

Dedicated to providing care, committed to patient safety, hearing our patients and supporting our diverse community

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Accessible Information Standard Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Policy statement

[The Accessible Information Standard \(AIS\)](#) came into effect on the 1 August 2016. All organisations that provide NHS care and/or publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the AIS.

The AIS 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.

Specifically, the General Medical Council's [Good Medical Practice 2013](#) states '*you should make sure that arrangements are made, wherever possible, to meet patients' language and communication needs*'.

Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have regarding the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the [CQC's GP Mythbuster 20: Making information accessible](#) and its document titled [Meeting the Accessible Information Standard](#).

1.2 Status

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of your contract of employment although it applies to all employees of the organisation and other individuals performing functions in relation to the organisation such as agency workers, locums and contractors.

The organisation aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#).

2 The Accessible Information Standard

2.1 Background

All organisations providing NHS or adult social care have a legal duty (produced under section 250 of the [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#) and supported by the Equality Act 2010 obligations) to make 'reasonable adjustments' to improve access for disabled people. [The Accessible Information Standard](#) aims to clarify what is 'reasonable' in making sure people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss receive information they can easily read or understand and get any communication support they need.

Since 2016, providers of any NHS funded care must, by law and the AIS covers patients, their parents and carers.

2.2 Aim

The aim of the AIS is to establish a framework and set a clear direction such 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 ("information which is able to be read or received and understood by the individual or group for which it is intended")
- Communication support ("support which is needed to enable effective, accurate dialogue between a professional and a service user to take place")

This includes accessible information and communication support to enable individuals to:

- Make decisions about their health and wellbeing and about their care and treatment
- Self-manage conditions

- Access services appropriately and independently
- Make choices about treatments and procedures including the provision or withholding of consent

2.3 Application of the AIS

All providers of NHS care are required to meet the AIS. The Standard applies to all services users who have information or communication needs as a result of disability, impairment or sensory loss. This includes patients who are:

- Deaf
- Blind
- Deafblind
- Suffering from learning disabilities

The Standard can also be used to support people with:

- Autism
- Mental health conditions
- Aphasia

The AIS should involve parents and carers.

2.4 Five steps of the AIS

The [five steps](#) of the AIS and how to comply with this guidance:

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.

2.5 Information in different languages

[CQC GP Mythbuster 20: Making information accessible](#) advises that there is no need for this organisation to have information leaflets in multiple languages. However, the key point is that London Road Surgery must be responsive to the needs of the population that we serve and commensurate with the demographics of our list.

Furthermore, the NHS E document details the [principles framework for high quality interpreting and translating services](#) in primary care. This covers both community language and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting.

2.6 How London Road Surgery meets the AIS

1. Identification of needs

London Road Surgery will ensure that the organisation website contains clear signposting and appropriate downloadable documentation, or that this is available on request, for patients who have communication needs. This information will be replicated in the waiting room and on all social media platforms. The website has an Accessible Information Standards page including this practice policy.

The website has an Accessibility Statement from Silicon Practice who run the website which gives details on how to adjust the website and provides contact information if parts of the website are not accessible.

The website has a Disability Access Policy page.

London Road Surgery will ensure that as much information about patients' specific needs is captured during the registration process the following questions are asked when a new patient completes their registration form online:

- What is the best way to contact you when it comes to your medical circumstances?
- Do you need to be communicated with in an accessible format? For example, braille, audio, large format text of EasyRead.
- Do you need any reasonable adjustments to make your visit to the GP surgery accessible? For example, an audible or visual alert in the waiting room, access to a hearing loop or the support of a note taker.

At London Road Surgery communication and/or information needs will be identified opportunistically the next time a patient makes contact with the practice. If a patient has needs it must be identified the specific nature of the support or format required. To ensure consistency London Road Surgery have agreed the following questions which we will use as standard.

Suggested questions which MAY be used to identify if an individual has any information and / or communication support needs, and the nature of these needs include:

- Do you have any communication needs?
- Do you need a format other than standard print?
- Do you have any special communication requirements?
- How do you prefer to be contacted?
- What is your preferred method of communication?
- How would you like us to communicate with you?
- Can you explain what support would be helpful?
- What communication support should we provide for you?
- What is the best way to send you information?

Specific additional or follow-up questions which it MAY be relevant to use as prompt or follow-up questions when communicating with particular individuals and / or in particular care settings are as follows:

- Do you have difficulty hearing, or need hearing aids, or need to lip-read what people say?
- Do you have difficulty with memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand?
- Do you have difficulty speaking or using language to communicate or make your needs known?

All staff will make appropriate arrangements for individuals to discuss their communication needs privately, should they wish to do so, whilst ensuring that sufficient information is ascertained and recorded accurately.

In addition, at London Road Surgery we have identified groups of patients where we consider it good practice to proactively identify communication and or information needs. The Ardens Communication Needs search will be run quarterly, and action taken.

2. Recording and flagging of needs

London Road Surgery will ensure that the necessary clinical coding of communication needs is added to the clinical records of patients upon registration. They will also ensure that the appropriate on-screen alert is operating and that it includes information regarding the preferred communication channel or what level of communication support is needed.

All staff at London Road Surgery will complete the Ardens Reasonable Adjustments, Communications & Accessibility template when identifying and recording support needs. This will ensure that recording is consistent and the appropriate flags are displayed under the Patient Status Alerts on the record home screen as 'Communication Needs'. All staff will ensure that this template is added to their clinic tree to ensure they have easy access to this information.

In relation to online access, staff will adhere to the [Access to Medical Records Policy](#).

3. Sharing of needs

Clinical members of staff are responsible for ensuring that, when a patient is referred to any other NHS or social care organisation, they are asked (at the time of consultation) for permission to share their communication needs with the other organisation.

All staff are to ensure they are aware of the applicable organisation privacy notice for their region of [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) or [Northern Ireland](#) and should, if necessary, refer patients to this notice.

Consent must be obtained and is to be clearly identifiable and separate from other comments entered into the healthcare record. For further information, refer to the [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\) Policy](#) and [Consent Guidance](#).

4. Meeting of needs

London Road Surgery will ensure that all correspondence affords patients the opportunity to have their individual information or communication needs met by including the following on said correspondence:

“If you would like this letter or information in an alternative format (for example, large print or easy read) or if you need help with communicating with us (for example, because you use British Sign Language), please let us know”

In addition, all printed communication to patients will:

- Use font Arial, Size 12 or preferably Size 14 (readable by a significantly greater number of people according to the NHS England’s Accessible Information Implementation Guidance v1.1).
- Use page numbers.
- Ensure that if printing double sided the text does not show through on the other side.

The organisation will ensure that a ‘hearing loop’ is available throughout the premises or that a portable loop is available. The organisation will also ensure that the current contact details for access to properly qualified persons who are registered interpreters for deafblind persons or who use sign language and other assisted communication methods are available in reception.

The organisation will ensure that only persons who are registered interpreters, properly qualified, insured and DBS checked to Enhanced Disclosure level are used.

2.7 Requirements and further reading

The UK nations’ requirements are as follows:

- [England](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)

Additionally, background information into the AIS can be found in the Gov.uk document titled [Accessible communication formats](#).

Scottish practices can refer to the [Accessible Information Standards Policy \(Scotland\)](#).

3 Summary

London Road Surgery has a duty to ensure that the AIS is adhered to and must also demonstrate how it is meeting the AIS. Effectively implementing the Standard will lead to improved patient experience and outcomes whilst ensuring that patients receive safe, high quality care at all times.

[Annex A](#) gives examples of the tools and assistance available as well as further reading and links to training for organisation use.

Annex A – Useful information and links

Listed are useful links to NHS England guidance on implementing the Accessible Information Standard (AIS).

This [link](#) provides the full list of factsheets and clarifying information. It also provides a further link to the comprehensive NHS E implementation guidance to support AIS. At London Road Surgery, we are aware that it is our responsibility to implement and to fully adhere to the AIS.

Within this NHS E link, there are numerous factsheets that can support implementation of AIS and the full implementation guidance to support AIS can be found [here](#).

Further information:

1. Disabled people's experiences and advice for healthcare professionals:

- This [video](#) shows members of Manchester People First talking about what helps them to attend health appointments
- A film about enabling communication with local Deaf people for front-line medical staff can be found [here](#)

In this YouTube clip, Deaf people talk about the importance of front-line staff having some basic sign language skills. The School of Sign Language provides [free](#) introductory resources into understanding British Sign Language (BSL).

2. Alternative format and communication support providers:

- [AbilityNet](#)

Support to ensure websites, apps and other digital services are accessible and compliant with access legislation. AbilityNet also provides guidance to disabled IT users to optimise accessibility to computers and smart phones (My Computer, My Way).

- [CHANGE People](#)

A human rights organisation led by disabled people. They create bespoke accessible information in easy read and video formats for organisations and much of the content has a health focus.

- [Relay UK](#)

Relay UK supports d/Deaf people and people with speech impairments to communicate with anyone over the phone using an app based national relay service.

- [Hearing Link](#)

Hearing Link has some advice and best practice tips for hearing loops for service users.

- [Inclusive language](#)

Gov.uk (Office for Disability Issues) provides guidance on words to use and avoid when discussing disability.

- Live Transcribe & Sound Notifications [App](#)

This is an app that makes everyday conversations and surrounding sounds more accessible among people who are deaf and hard of hearing, using just a phone.

- [National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People \(NRCPD\)](#)

NRCPD exists to protect the public by regulating communication and language professionals who work with deaf and deafblind people.

They hold a searchable register of interpreters for d/Deaf and deafblind people and also lipspeakers, notetakers, sign language interpreters, sign language translators and speech to text reporters.

- [RNIB Business - Transcription Services](#)

RNIB's transcription team takes original copy and transforms it into accessible formats including braille, large and giant print and audio.

- [Breakthrough UK](#)

Breakthrough UK is a Manchester based disabled people's organisation led by disabled people who support other disabled people to work and live independently.

Breakthrough is able to provide training for staff.