



North East and North Cumbria

NHS North East and North Cumbria
Integrated Care Board

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RE: Accessible Information Standards in Health and Care – May - August 2022

Good morning Jennifer,

Thank you very much for sending us this draft report which provides valuable feedback from people with learning disabilities, sensory loss and mental health issues about their accessibility needs regarding health and care services.

We recognise from feedback featured within the report that although most respondents had received information when they asked, there are some instances where services have not met Accessibility Information Standards (AIS) requirements to provide information in a way that people can understand, impacting their quality of care, and that family / carers are vital in providing support to people to ensure they understand the information they receive.

We have provided our response to your recommendations below:

#	Recommendation	Responsible Body	Comments
1.	Health and care services to be accountable for delivering the Accessible Information Standard.	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust	As an Integrated Care Board (ICB), we aim to support our colleagues throughout the NHS to ensure they are able to meet the criteria set out in the AIS as it is a legal requirement for them to do so. This is monitored by the Care Quality Commission . As a public facing organisation, we want to ensure we make information accessible to patients, service users and their carers. This includes making sure that people get information in different formats if they need it, such as large print, braille, easy read, and via email.

		North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust.	
2.	Every health and care service to have an accessibility champion so that health and social care staff know who is responsible for leading local accessible information policy and delivery, and to support staff awareness of their compliance with the standard.	<p>Stockton-on Tees Borough Council</p> <p>NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board</p> <p>Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust</p> <p>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust.</p>	<p>We have an Executive Chief People Officer, who has Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within their portfolio, and is supported by a Director dedicated to EDI. We also have an Executive Director of Corporate Governance, Communications and Involvement, who is supported by a Director of Communications, a Director of Governance and Involvement and a team of governance, communications and involvement professionals. These Directors work closely together and accessibility is a key consideration within their work.</p> <p>Beyond supporting with adherence to the AIS, we cannot stipulate that other organisations (such as GP practices) must have an accessibility champion, however, this is something that organisations can choose to do if they wish.</p>
3.	To involve people with communication needs in designing better services.	<p>Stockton-on Tees Borough Council</p> <p>NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board</p> <p>Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust</p> <p>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust.</p>	<p>Our Communities and People Involvement and Engagement Strategy for the North East and North Cumbria (available here) sets out our commitment to involving people at the centre of decision making and governance at every level of the Integrated Care System (ICS) for the North East and North Cumbria.</p> <p>We have adopted key principles such as building relationships with excluded groups (such as those affected by health inequalities), working with local Healthwatch and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations as key partners, providing clear and accessible information about our vision, plans and progress, co-producing and redesigning services and tackling system priorities in partnership with people and communities.</p> <p>To ensure that we are able to involve people with accessibility requirements in our work, we complete equality impact assessments when planning to identify people who may be disadvantaged, and offer alternative formats for communications and engagement materials on request.</p>

4.	To provide mandatory training on accessible information for all health and care staff - to enable staff to understand the standard and regularly provide information in the formats patients need, and to proactively ask patients about their communication needs.	<p>Stockton-on Tees Borough Council</p> <p>NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board</p> <p>Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust</p> <p>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust.</p>	<p>ICB staff are required to complete a mandatory introduction to equality, diversity and human rights training module, which provides an overview of the principles of equality and diversity, organisational policies and processes and being proactively inclusive. Additionally, staff able to enrol in an Accessible Information Standard module, which helps them to effectively apply and follow its principles, and we are exploring the potential to further embed AIS training across our organisation to ensure a consistent understanding.</p> <p>When planning involvement, engagement or consultation exercises, we apply best practice methods (such as the Gunning Principles) to ensure all information we produce is accessible as possible to our patients and the wider public. We also liaise with key partners and community leaders who represent seldom heard groups to understand communication needs, such as alternative languages, British Sign Language etc., and also offer an opportunity for people to request materials in alternative formats if they are required.</p>
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Thank you very much for sharing this report and we look forward to reading the next one.

Kind regards,

Alex Sinclair – Director of Place (Stockton)
NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

Cc: **David Gallagher** – Executive Director of Place (Tees Valley and Central)
NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board