



Accessible Information Standard

The Accessible Information Standard aims to ensure that people who have a disability or sensory impairment receive information that can be accessible and understood. Any organisation that provides NHS or adult social care will need to implement these standards and compliance with the accessible information standard SC11605 (set out in section 250 the Health and Social Care Act).

By 31 July 2016 GP practices must be fully compliant with all aspects of the standards.

Commissioning organisations, whilst not required to implement the standards themselves, must support compliance by organisations from which they commission services. The guidance sets out that this could be done by, for example, incentivisation and performance management arrangements.

Non-compliant organisations are advised that they lay themselves open to risk of complaints and investigation.

The standard requires organisations to:

Ask people if they have any information or communication needs, and find out how to meet those needs.

Record those needs clearly.

Highlight or flag the person's file or notes so that it is clear that they have the information or communications needs.

Share people's information and communication needs with other providers of NHS and adult social care, when they have consent to do so.

Take steps to ensure that people receive information which they can access and understand, and receive communication support if they need it.

Practices do not need to trawl retrospectively through the notes to identify patient needs, but do need to start identifying now how the notes should be marked to identify patient need or what the patient should be asked. This should include obtaining consent for sharing this information with other services, when a new patient registers or opportunistically when they contact the practice. Issues around staff training also need to be addressed, as the processes that practices adopt will likely be checked at Care Quality Commission visits.

Further information is available in the BMA document 'Focus on the Accessible Information Standard for GP practices in England' as well as FAQs.