Trafford Council

Accessible Communications Policy

For Adult Social Care

July 2016

Policy Document Control Page/Coversheet
Title: Title: Accessible Communications Policy for Adult Social Care   Version: 3   Date: 29.7.2016
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Links to other Trafford Council Documents: 1. Trafford Council Equality and Diversity Service Delivery Policy   2. Trafford Council Accessible Standards Key   3. Trafford Council Data Protection Policy, Statement and Guidance for Employees   4. Trafford Council Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy for Adult Social Care   5. Meeting Requirements Form
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Process   EIA undertaken by: • Principal Community Cohesion & Equalities Officer   EIA approved on: EIA signed off by: Acting Head of Service, North Area   EIA included in Report to SLT

Approval Process/Governance for Policy
Draft Policy to be signed off by Director of Integrated Care
Final sign off by SLT
Publication/Circulation of Policy
An e-copy of this policy is sent to all staff in Children, Families & Wellbeing & Partners in Integrated Health Teams and Public Health.
The policy will be published on the Council Website.
Date posted:
Review
Review Date: September 2017
Responsibility of: Adele Coyne

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1   The Accessible Information Standard (AIS) was published by NHS England in June 2015 to improve the way that health and social care services respond to the communication needs of service users and their carers. It is a mandatory requirement that all providers of NHS or publicly funded adult social care must follow by law under Section 250 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Please see https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/patients/accessibleinfo/ for full details.

1.2   The Standard requires providers to **identify, record, flag, share and meet** the information and communication support needs of people with an impairment or sensory loss. Providers listed in the requirements of the Standard include:

- Providers of publicly funded adult social care or services (including care homes, and day support)
- Adult social care organisations in their role as service providers
- Providers of adult social care from the voluntary, community and private sectors
- Providers of public health.

1.3   The NHS Accessible Information Standards Specification states that:

'The aim of the Standard is to establish a framework to ensure that 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 and communication support appropriate to their needs.'

1.4   **Terminology for the purpose of this Policy:**

- 'Accessible information' ('information which is able to be read or received and understood by the individual or group for which it is intended'); and
- 'Communication support' ('support which is needed to enable effective, accurate dialogue between a professional and a service user and/or carer to take place').

1.5   The Specification clearly states that communication support must be put in place by providers so that service users *'are not put at a substantial disadvantage........in comparison with persons who are not disabled'* when accessing NHS or adult social services. This is to enable service users to:

- Make decisions about their health and wellbeing, and about their care and treatment
- Self-manage conditions
- Access services appropriately and independently

1.6   Regarding the benefits of the Standard the 'NHS Accessible Information Standards Specification states that: 'Successful implementation will lead to improved outcomes and experiences and the provision of safer and more personalised care and services to those individuals who come within the Standard's scope.'

1.7   The Accessible Communications Policy for Trafford Adult Social Care is written in accordance with the Standard's requirement that organisations must prepare and publish or display an accessible communications policy or similar which outlines how they will: identify, record, flag, share and meet the information and communication needs of adult social care service users and their carers.

2.   Supporting Legislation for the Standard / Legal context

2.1   The Standard builds upon existing legislation, in particular, the Equality Act 2010 and the Care Act 2014.

2.2   The Equality Act 2010 places a legal duty on all service providers to take steps or make 'reasonable adjustments' in order to avoid putting a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage when compared to a person who is not disabled. The Act is explicit in including the provision of information in 'an accessible format' as a 'reasonable step' to be taken.

2.3   The Care Act 2014 details specific duties for local authorities with regards to the provision of advice and information and includes the requirement that, "Information and advice provided under this section must be accessible to, and proportionate to the needs of, those for whom it is being provided."

2.4   The Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2016 states that:

"The local authority must ensure that there is an accessible information and advice service that meets the needs of its population. Information and advice must be open to everyone who would benefit from it. People access information and advice from a wide variety of sources. The authority should take account of information standards published by the Information Standards Board for Health and Social Care under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012."

3.   Service Users in Scope of the Policy

3.1   While the Standard applies to all providers of NHS and publicly funded adult social care in terms of service delivery responsibilities, the service users in scope to receive support under the Standard include people who:

- Are Deaf
- Are blind
- Are deafblind
- Have a learning disability
- Have autism
- Have dementia
- Have hearing and/or visual loss (impairment)

- Have communication difficulties following a stroke or brain injury
- Have multiple impairments such as hearing loss and being learning disabled
- Have other 'communication disabilities' such as aphasia, autism or a mental health condition which affects their ability to communicate.

3.2   The above list also includes the carers, and where appropriate, parents of service users, who have information and / or communication support needs which are related to or caused by a disability, impairment or sensory loss.

4.   Services Users Out of Scope of the Standard

4.1   Service users and carers with needs that do not come under the Standard include:

- Individuals who may have difficulty in reading or understanding information for reasons other than a disability, impairment or sensory loss, for example due to low literacy or a <u>learning difficulty</u> (such as dyslexia) (as distinct from a learning disability)

- People who require interpretation or translation because English is not their first language

4.2   The above are covered by the Equality Act 2010 which indicates where reasonable adjustments have to be made.

4.3   Other service users and services excluded from the Standard are:

- Employees and contractors
- Recording of demographic data / protected characteristic strand affiliation
- Recording for statistical analysis or central reporting
- General standards for communication
- Individuals' preferences
- Corporate communications produced / published by organisations which do not relate to direct patient / service user care or services, and do not directly affect individuals' health or wellbeing
- Matters of consent and capacity, including support for decision-making, which are not related to information or communication support
- Standards for, and design of, signage (also covered by the Equality Act 2010).

5. Types of Communication Support

5.1 Providing communication support includes meeting people's needs for: information in 'non-standard', alternative or specific formats; use of specific or alternative contact methods; arrangement of support from a communication professional (for example a deafblind manual interpreter or British Sign Language interpreter); and support to communicate in a different or particular way / to use communication aids (for example to lipread or use a hearing aid).

5.2 For people in scope of the Standard, appropriate resources that can be used include the following:

- People with learning disabilities may use Makaton (which uses signs, symbols and speech to help people communicate), the Communication passport and /or require information in Easy Read format.

- Deafblind people may require a British Sign Language interpreter, hands-on signing and / or speech-to-text-reporter.

- People with deaf or hearing loss may need a BSL interpreter; those with a hearing aid will require meeting rooms with a loop system; others may prefer to Lipread and many prefer to communicate by email and / or mobile phone text.

- People who are blind or with a sight impairment may prefer to receive information in Braille, large written text or by email so it can be accessed by using a Screen Reader (converts text to speech) on their personal computers.

6. Policy Statement

6.1 Trafford Council is committed to improving the way that health and adult social care services respond to the information and communication needs of their service users and their carers in accordance with the Accessible Information Standard. In order to achieve this, Trafford Council will ensure that:

- All paper, electronic systems and processes for recording information will include methods to: identify, record, alert and share the communication support needs of all adult social care service users and carers where they relate to a disability, or sensory loss / impairment.

- Electronic systems and paper documentation are formatted with appropriate alerts and prompts in place to make any record of information or communication needs highly visible, standardised and clear.

- Service users and their carers are asked about their communication and information needs proactively at first point of contact and as a matter of routine.

- Adult Social Care staff are aware that any information about individuals' support needs is shared with professionals from external /partner agencies on a strictly 'need to know' basis.

- All Adult Social Care staff are made aware that they must follow information governance, data protection and other confidentiality protocols at all times in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. This includes the use of clients' personal details on electronic and paper communications.

- Resources and facilities are in place, including contractual arrangements through the Council's Procurement Section, so that individuals receive information which they can access and understand, and receive communication support if needed.

- There is delivery of awareness raising briefings and provision of training opportunities for Adult Social Care staff about the Accessible Information Standard, its requirements and the resources available for meeting the support needs of services users and their carers.

- The Accessible Information Standard is incorporated in contracts with adult social care and health providers commissioned by the Council, and they include the expectation that providers will make the necessary changes and train appropriate staff.

- There is legal compliance regarding the Standard included in terms and conditions of contracts.

- An accessible Adult Social Care Complaints Policy is published with clear procedures in place for service users and their carers to make a complaint, raise a concern or give feedback in alternative formats and with appropriate communication support if required.

- Adult Social Care information provided by the Trafford Service Directory is available online. Hard copies can be printed off, there is a Browse Aloud facility in place and information can be offered in other accessible formats on request.

- Relevant voluntary and community sector organisations and partners are informed about the provision the Council has in place for meeting the Standard and that we liaise with them to share information about available resources and feedback about the experiences of service users and carers.