ADVANCED

ADVANCED HEALTHCARE CENTRE

Accessible Information Standard Policy

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act (2010) strengthened existing legislation to ensure that people with a range of protected characteristics received equitable access to high quality public services. However, this did not always result in reasonable adjustments being made for patients with communication and information needs. The Accessible Information Standard (AIS) was published by NHS England in 2016 to specifically address this issue.

The AIS places a mandatory requirement on providers to identify, record, flag, meet and share patients' information and/or communication needs, where these needs relate to a disability, cognitive impairment or sensory loss. The AIS also applies to any disability-related information and communication needs that a patient's carer or (for patients aged under 18 years) their parent/ guardian may have.

Through the Equality Act and AIS, all Advanced Healthcare Centre (AHC) staff, volunteers and others representing them must provide every possible reasonable adjustment with regards to communication and information support for service-users with a disability. Furthermore, whilst the AIS apply specifically to patients with a disability, its key principles reflect good practice for supporting all patients who have ongoing communication or information needs.

PURPOSE

This policy outlines AHC's responsibilities in respect of the AIS and sets out AHC's commitment to ensuring these are met.

SCOPE

The AIS applies to patients who have a disability. The AIS also applies to any disability-related information and communication needs for a patient's carer. This could include (but is not restricted to):

(a) People who are blind or have some visual loss
(b) People who are deaf or have some hearing loss
(c) People who are deafblind
(d) People with a learning disability
(e) People with autism spectrum disorder
(f) People with a dementia
(g) People with aphasia
(h) People with a mental health condition that affects their ability to communicate

The following are <u>not</u> covered by the AIS and are therefore out of scope of this policy:

(i) Staff with a disability, except where they are acting in a personal or nonemployment capacity
(j) A communication preference which does not relate to a disability
(k) An individual who has difficulty with reading or understanding information for reasons other than a disability
(l) Where disability-related support is required that is not related to information or communication
(m) Provision of translating and interpreting support to non-English speakers, unless it relates specifically to a disability, impairment or sensory loss (e.g. British Sign Language).
(n) Communication/information that is not related to a patient's NHS care, treatment or service.

The AIS relates to disability-related communication and information needs. However, the core principle of making reasonable adjustments for people with specific needs is applicable to a much wider range of situations, and is part of the AHC's commitment to provide high quality care for everyone who uses our services.

DEFINITIONS

Accessible Information Standard (AIS)
Since 1st August 2016, all organisations that provide NHS care and/or publicly-funded adult social care have been legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The Standard sets out a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, carers and parents with a disability, impairment or sensory loss.

Accessible information and communication
Information and/or communication that can be understood by the individual for which it is intended. In the context of the AIS, communication relates to dialogue between an individual and an NHS professional or service. Information is "read or received".

Disability
The Equality Act 2010 describes disability as follows: a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

AIS-related needs
A patient's communication and information needs that arise from a disability.

Communication support
Any support which is needed to enable effective, accurate dialogue to take place between a healthcare professional, service or organisation, and a patient.

Communication support may involve a tool or aid, for example:

- Using simple pictures or diagrams.
- Using a British Sign Language or Makaton interpreter, lip speaker, or note taker.
- Using a hearing loop.

Alternative format
Information provided in an alternative to standard printed or handwritten English, for example large print, coloured paper, easy-read, audio, or braille.

Patient
In the context of this policy: a patient or carer accessing AHC's services, who has an AIS-related need.

POLICY STATEMENT AND PROVISIONS

Raising awareness of the AIS
AHC will:

(a) Proactively raise awareness of the AIS to patients and staff, for example via internal communications
(b) Highlight the availability of information and communication support to patients via the AHC website
(c) Include the AIS in their mandatory equality and diversity staff training and associated updates
(d) Publish the AIS Policy on their website.

AIS compliance
AHC will:

(a) Have a nominated member of staff responsible for providing corporate oversight of their AIS compliance.
(b) Regularly monitor AIS compliance through the Quality and Safety Experience Committee.
(c) Have an action plan to address areas of AIS compliance that require improvement.
(d) Set clear expectations to all staff in respect of meeting peoples' AIS-related needs, for example through the AIS Policy.
(e) Formally monitor risks associated with AIS compliance.
(f) Monitor, share and act upon learning from incidents and complaints relating to the AIS.
(g) Carry out audits in respect of AIS compliance.

Identifying and recording accessible information and communication needs
AHC will:

(a) Provide the facility for staff to record people's AIS-related needs on their main electronic patient record system (SystmOne).
(b) Ensure that the main electronic patient record system has the facility to flag people's AIS-related needs as an alert, ensuring that this alert is visible to any authorised member of staff accessing that patient record.
(c) Support the education of AHC staff to better understand the different types of information and communication needs that service-users could have.

Meeting service-users' AIS related-needs
AHC will:

(a) Provide patients with information and communication support for their AIS related needs, free of charge.

(b) Ensure that any external providers commissioned by them to provide information and communication support to patients is delivering a high quality service.

(c) Have a wide range of information and communication support available to patients, including (but not restricted to):

- British Sign Language interpreting and associated services for the deaf;
- Patient information leaflets available in alternative formats;
- Braille translation;
- Hearing loops;
- Advocates for people with a learning disability or mental health need;
- Note takers / electronic note taking.

(d) Ensure that there are processes in place for patients with an identified AIS related need to receive correspondence from them in alternative formats.

REFERENCES

NHS England Accessible Information Standard:
https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/accessibleinfo/