

# The Accessible Information Standard:

## What you need to know and what you need to do now

### Issue

NHS England has introduced a new Accessible Information Standard as a legal requirement for all providers of NHS and adult social care services in England. This includes GOS contractors.

The purpose of the Standard is to ensure that people who have communication needs because of a learning disability or sensory impairment receive information in a suitable format of their choice.

Along with the other primary care professions, the Optical Confederation responded to the consultation on this Standard in 2014, pointing out both the difficulties and costs of implementation in primary care and calling for further discussions. However the Standard was approved, unchanged, on 24 June 2015.

The primary care professions, including the Optical Confederation, are working together to make further representations to NHS England about the impracticability and costs of immediate implementation as proposed and to consider how costs can be minimised.

### Action

In the meantime the Standard requires providers (including GOS contractors) to have started preparing for implementation by September 2015. Full implementation of the Standard is expected of providers by July 2016 (see timeline below).

To read and think about the information contained in this guidance note constitutes preparing to implement the Standard and means contractors will not be in breach of contract. Further advice from the Optical Confederation will be issued to support contractors, in the light of representations being made to NHS England.

### New Requirements

Key requirements of the new Standard are that providers:

- 1) **Ask:** always find out if a new or returning (NHS) patient has any information or communication support needs *relating to a learning disability, impairment or sensory loss*;
- 2) **Record:** clearly and consistently record those needs in paper or electronic records;
- 3) **Alert/Flag:** ensure that the recorded needs are 'highly visible' whenever the individual's record is accessed (e.g. highlighted in a different colour on the front sheet of paper records or as a flag/banner on each page of an electronic record);
- 4) **Share:** include information about people's information and communication needs at referral, discharge and handover – with appropriate consent – according to your existing data sharing processes; and
- 5) **Act:** make reasonable adjustments to ensure that people receive information in a format they can understand.

**It has not yet been clarified how such adjustments (e.g. BSL interpreters) are to be funded**

This Standard applies to those with a sensory or learning disability. It does not apply to those who require an English language translator. However, an extension of the Standard to cover languages is proposed for the future.

## Current Timeline Requirements

Date	Task
By September 2015	<p>You MUST have <u>begun</u> to prepare for implementation of the Standard by reviewing your current systems and processes, the awareness of your staff and the accessibility of information materials (e.g. leaflets).</p> <p><b><i>To meet this requirement you should read this Optical Confederation guidance note, share it with all staff in your practice, and begin to consider what systems you already use to support people with communication needs and how you could improve them.</i></b></p>
By 01 April 2016	<p>You MUST be routinely asking about and recording information and communication needs of all patients. You may be able to act on this information right away by making simple adjustments, but you are not legally required to take any action yet.</p> <p><b><i>During autumn 2015 the Optical Confederation will produce detailed guidance and templates to enable you to put in place all necessary measures to comply with the Standard.</i></b></p>
By 31 July 2016	Full implementation of the Standard is required.

## Further Information

Once we are clear about the requirements, and that they are reasonable and proportionate, the Optical Confederation will produce guidance setting how you should go about implementing this new Standard in practice.

In the meantime for further information, please contact

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Optical Confederation

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