	Name of document	Accessible Information Policy
	Author	John Williams
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	Version	1.0
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Accessible information Policy


The accessibility policy aims to ensure that all patients have access to information they can understand and the communication support they may need when accessing our healthcare services. This policy sets out standards of service delivery, that patients should expect from Alyn Family Doctors.

Legal Duty


There is a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to deliver equality of access to healthcare services for disabled people. This duty is anticipatory and requires public bodies to be proactive in making adjustments to ensure all access and communication needs are met.

Key requirements

- People with sensory loss, a disability or impairment should be asked to describe their communication needs when they register with a new GP or primary healthcare service. Arrangements should also be made to gather this information for existing patients. This should describe a patient's individual communication needs in a practical way. For example, a record should not only say that a patient is Deafblind but also requires written communication in a minimum of Arial 14pt and that speech should be clear.
- It is important that staff are patient and sensitive in their approach in asking a patient to describe their communication and information needs.
- A 'flagging' system on a patient's computer or paper record should enable practice staff to understand the needs of the patient when they attend the practice. This should also apply to any patient appointments carried out within the patient's home or within a community setting, including care homes.
- Good signage is important in ensuring that people with sensory loss are able to access the healthcare they need. To minimise their anxiety and any confusion all signs should be clear and easy to understand.
- It is important to recognise that environmental factors influence effective communication with people who have sensory loss. It is important to check that the healthcare environment is accessible and that it encourages effective communication. This should include lighting, colour contrasting and background noise.
- When patients are referred from primary care for treatment in secondary care, their communication needs should be transferred using the referral process. Patients should not have to keep repeating that they have a sensory loss, disability or impairment and the communication support they require.

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- People should be able to make an appointment through a variety of contact methods as a telephone based appointment system may be inaccessible to them. This would include email, text messaging, textphones and websites.
- All appropriate staff should be trained in any communication systems provided by the health board. This should include developing their awareness of the need for different forms of communication.
- All reception and consultation areas should be fitted with a hearing loop induction system or other appropriate technology, for example, portable hearing loops, allowing hearing aid users to make full use of their hearing aids in a potentially noisy setting. Staff should be capable of checking that loops are functioning and know how to use them. There should be appropriate signage to make patients aware of the provision of a loop system.
- All staff should be trained in how to communicate effectively with someone with a sensory loss. This training should reflect a person-centred approach which encourages staff to use clear speech and respond appropriately to individual needs. This is particularly important for clinical staff as patients need to understand what is being communicated to them when they attend for a consultation.
- When patients with sensory loss arrive at a primary healthcare setting there should be arrangements in place to ensure that they do not miss their appointments. For example, a member of the reception team could make sure that a patient with sensory loss is made aware of when the GP is ready to see them.
- Every patient or service user who requires communication support should have this need met, by for example, arranging a British Sign Language Interpreter or Lip speaker or providing a hearing loop induction system. It is important to have an awareness of other communication methods that may not be as well known, for example, speech to text or live captioning.
- Appropriate communication support should also be provided to people with sensory loss who may be attending an appointment in the capacity of a carer or as the parent of a child.
- It is also important to recognise any other language need that a patient may have, for example, the Welsh language or other minority languages. In every instance it is important to ask the individual patient to describe their needs.
- For those patients and service users who are blind or have a visual impairment, letters should be sent out in accessible formats, for example Braille or larger font. In every instance where written communication is required with a person with sensory loss, the individual patient should be asked to indicate the appropriate format for them and this should be provided.
- It is important that the different forms of communication are promoted to patients and service users and they are encouraged to access them.
- Healthcare professionals have a responsibility to make certain that patients leave the healthcare setting having heard and understood everything they need to know

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about their healthcare. Appropriate procedures should be in place to ensure that information is conveyed clearly to patients during a consultation.

- Where patients are referred on to other specialist services, for example, counselling services, it is important that their information and communication needs are met by other service providers. Patients should not experience unreasonable delays in accessing healthcare because of a need for accessible information and communication support.
- It is essential that advice and guidance is sought from appropriate organisations that represent people with sensory loss. These are listed in Appendix 1

Patient Advisors

Patient Advisors, and any other staff at any time covering reception, are responsible for following the below:

- **Ask:** identify if an individual has any communication / information needs relating to a disability or sensory loss and if so what they are. Specifically, we will meet this step by including a 'prompt' question as part of registration process.
- **Record:** record those needs in a clear, unambiguous and standardised way in electronic and / or paper based record.
- **Flag:** ensure that recorded needs are "highly visible" whenever the individual's record is accessed and prompt for action. Specifically, we will meet this step by the use of electronic flags or alerts.
- **Act:** take steps to ensure that individuals receive information which they can access and understand, and receive communication support if they need it. Specifically, we will meet this step by making available hearing loop systems, providing a range of ways for people to contact / communicate with the practice / service including email and text message, arranging professional communication support as needed to enable effective conversation, , identifying and providing of alternative formats and communication support.

Communication


This policy is publicly available on the Alyn Family Doctors website.

<http://www.alynfamilydoctors.co.uk/>

Hard copies are also available on request from Reception. This policy has been disseminated to staff via internal communications. For new staff, the availability and importance of this policy will be highlighted as part of induction.

Concerns and Feedback

- Information on how to give feedback or raise a concern should be in an accessible format (large print, audio and plain English) and provide a variety of contact methods to meet individual needs.
- In every instance the individual patient should be asked to indicate the appropriate format for them.

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Monitoring and Review

- These standards should be subject to regular review and monitoring with the aim of improving access to healthcare for people with sensory loss, disability or impairment.

Appendix 1

Guidance and Further Information

Action on Hearing Loss Cymru

Website: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk
 Email: wales@hearingloss.org.uk
 Telephone: 029 2033 3034
 Textphone: 029 2033 3036



Deafblind Cymru

Website: www.deafblind.org.uk
 Email: info@deafblind.org.uk
 Telephone: 0800 132 320 (Freephone)
 Textphone: 0800 132 320 (Freephone)
 Fax: 01733 358356



The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk
 Email: guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk
 Telephone: 0118 983 5555



Hearing dogs for Deaf People

Website: www.hearingdogs.org.uk
 Email: info@hearingdogs.org.uk
 Telephone: 01844 348100 (voice and minicom)
 Fax: 01844 348101



RNIB


Website: www.mib.org.uk
 Email: helpline@mib.org.uk
 Telephone: 0303123 9999



Sense Cymru

Website: www.sense.org.uk
 Email: info@sense.org.uk
 Telephone: 0845 127 0066 or 020 7520 0972
 Textphone: 0845 127 0066 or 020 7520 0972



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Sight Cymru

Website: www.sightsupport.org.uk
 Email: postman@sightcymru.org.uk
 Telephone: 01495 763550 or email



Vision in Wales (Wales Council for the Blind)

Website: www.wcb-ccd.org.uk
 Email: staff@wcb-ccd.org.uk
 Telephone: 029 2047 3954



Wales Council for Deaf People

Website: www.wcdeaf.org.uk
 Email: mail@wcdeaf.org.uk
 Telephone: 01443 485687 (voice)
 01443 485686 (text)
 Fax: 01443 408555



North Wales Deaf Association

Website: www.deafassociation.co.uk
 Email: info@deafassociation.co.uk
 Telephone: 01492 563470
 Text: 07719 410355
 Minicom: 01492 563475
 Fax: 01492 593781

