

# Accessible Information Standard

Since 1 August 2016, the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) has been in place. The AIS aims to make sure that disabled people get information in a way that they can access and understand. To find out more W: <http://bit.ly/2cLFXFg>

- Healthwatch wanted to understand the impact that the legislation had had on people’s experiences of using local health and social care services over the last 12 months.
- During autumn/ winter 2017, Healthwatch carried out a series of visits to gather people’s feedback, in addition to a running survey.

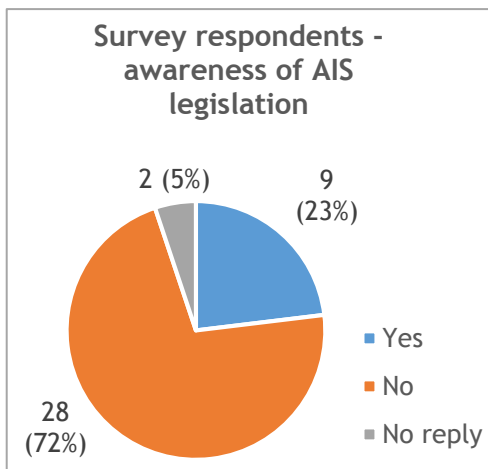
The AIS legislation is applicable to patients or carers with a disability, impairment or sensory loss, therefore the engagement that Healthwatch carried out was targeted at these specific groups. During this work, Healthwatch reached 70 people and received 39 survey responses.

It soon became clear through the survey that there is a lack of public awareness of the AIS. 28 respondents (72%) reported not having heard of the legislation. Of these, 20 individuals (71%) reported using primary care services in the first instance, which highlights the importance of these services in raising awareness of the AIS with the public.

Almost half of respondents that had not heard of the AIS had a disability, impairment or sensory loss that would be recognised by the legislation.

25 respondents (65%) felt that services provide information in a way that they require, however they often reported needing to be proactive in asking for accessing it, rather than it being offered.

In general Healthwatch found staff have good knowledge of the need to support people with communications needs, however they are not always aware of the AIS or its requirements on how they operate.



“Signage at the RUH is very poor, often staff have to take people to departments which uses up their valuable time”

Royal United Hospital Bath patient

“I am pleased that I am now monitored on a monthly basis for my vision. In the past that did not happen.

Bristol Eye Hospital patient

“In surgery call up for patients is only spoken, what about patients with a hearing impairment?”

Service user, South Gloucestershire



Healthwatch would like to thank the members of the public that contributed to this project as well as the organisations that supported them, including RNIB, Royal United Hospital Bath, BaNES Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), B&NES Council, South Gloucestershire CCG and South Gloucestershire Council.

# Accessible Information Standard

## 1) Recognising good practice:

Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership (AWP) has set-up its own AIS steering group, which is overseeing a programme of work across the Trust.

Projects being run by the Trust include:

- developing resources to support a diverse range of information and communication needs
- recording and flagging clients' needs
- acquiring software to facilitate client and carer interaction with the AWP website and resources
- identifying interpretation providers for spoken language, translation and British Sign Language
- offering Deaf awareness training and piloting a scheme to enable Deaf clients to access crisis services by email or text
- developing a Trust-wide policy to enable Deaf people or people with social anxiety conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorders (which preclude telephone communication)
- developing signage for Deaf people to enable access to buildings which are usually accessed by intercom

## 2) Recognising good practice:

During two visits to the Royal United Hospital Bath, Healthwatch observed positive work being done to improve accessibility for patients within the Audiology and Ophthalmology departments.

Examples included: signage in large print and colours appropriate for patients with additional accessibility needs, posters prompting patients to share their communication needs with staff, and provision of a range of information about support services.

## 3) Recognising good practice:

Healthwatch South Gloucestershire and The Hive Avon have partnered to deliver a project called *Hivewatch*, funded by South Gloucestershire's Learning Difficulties Partnership Board.

Five volunteers, all of whom have learning disabilities, have been trained to carry out visits to health and social care settings to observe the care being provided, gather feedback from service users and consider the accessibility of services for people with learning disabilities.

The volunteers have observed some excellent practice and received positive responses to their recommendations from providers. Reports from the visits can be viewed online **W:** <http://bit.ly/2FZNxtr>.

## What will happen next?

Healthwatch will hold an event for health and social care providers, during which we hope people will be able to share learning around implementing the AIS and explore further work that their organisations can do to improve the experiences of patients and carers.

