Making health and social care information accessible

# Summary of progress with the project and next steps – January / February 2015

## Introduction and overview

NHS England’s main aim is to improve people’s health. We want to make sure that people can understand the information they are given about their health and care. We also want everyone to be able to get involved in decisions that affect them.

We know that some people need information in a different format, or help to communicate or say what they think.

We are writing a new guidebook for health and social care organisations across England. The guidebook will be an ‘[Information Standard](http://systems.hscic.gov.uk/data/learn)’ which is a set of rules which organisations must follow.

The guidebook will tell organisations how they should make sure that people with a disability or sensory loss get information in the right format for them, and any support they need to communicate. This includes providing alternative formats such as braille or easy read, and using different ways to communicate with people, such email. It also includes arranging support from a communication professional such as a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or deafblind manual interpreter.

The standard will tell organisations how they should find out about, record and act upon people’s information and communication support needs.

We think that the standard will particularly affect people who are d/Deaf, blind, deafblind, have some hearing or visual loss, and / or a learning disability. We also think that the standard will support people with aphasia, autism, and / or a mental health condition which affects their ability to communicate.

Our plan is that the standard will cover all providers and commissioners of NHS and adult social care, including GPs, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and hospitals.

The standard is following a formal process to be approved as a new information standard. The Standardisation Committee for Care Information (SCCI) has responsibility for approving information standards for the health and care system. You can find out [more about SCCI on the NHS England website](http://www.england.nhs.uk/iscg/scci/).

## Progress to date

During winter 2013 / 2014 we asked people for their experiences and opinions about accessible information and communication support through surveys and workshops. You can read a full report about the engagement activity [on our website](http://www.england.nhs.uk/accessibleinfo).

We used what people told us as part of the engagement phase to write the draft standard, which was approved by SCCI in August 2014. This means that the standard has successfully passed through the formal ‘draft’ stage of the development process.

From mid-August until 09 November 2014 there was a consultation on the draft standard. The consultation gave people the chance to let us know what they thought about the draft standard, before the standard is final. A consultation report will be available [on the NHS England website](http://www.england.nhs.uk/accessibleinfo) from February / March 2015.

During January – March 2015 we are working with some NHS and adult social care organisations to pilot or test out the draft standard. This is to make sure that it will work in different health and care settings and to see if there are things which need to be changed before it is final. If your organisation provides NHS or social care services and you are interested in working with us please contact us by emailing england.nhs.participation@nhs.net

## Next steps

We will use what people told us as part of the consultation and the findings from the pilot stage to write the final version of the accessible information standard. We plan to send the final standard to the Standardisation Committee for Care Information (SCCI) for them to consider in May or June 2015.

Organisations will need to follow the standard once it is approved. We will provide advice and guidance to organisations to help them follow the standard. Organisations can start to follow the standard straightaway after it is approved. However, we know that some changes will take time for organisations to make. We think that organisations will have 12 months to make sure that they are following the standard, but this might change once we know the results of the consultation and pilot stage.

## More information

More information about the standard is available [on the NHS England website](http://www.england.nhs.uk/accessibleinfo) in a range of alternative formats. Information can also be requested by sending an email to england.nhs.participation@nhs.net or telephoning 0113 8251324.

For more information about information standards please visit the [Health and Social Care Information Centre website](http://systems.hscic.gov.uk/data/learn) and / or the [NHS England website](http://www.england.nhs.uk/iscg/scci/).