

Foreword

Awaiting foreword

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Executive Summary

1. Since August 2016, any organisation which provides NHS and/or publicly-funded adult social care services are required to follow the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). The standard aims to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information that they can access and understand and that they get any communication support they need from health and care services.
2. At the Healthwatch Manchester board meeting in March 2018, an action plan was agreed which authorised the AIS pharmacy reviews.
3. Work commenced on this piece of work in October 2022 and was conducted by Healthwatch Manchester staff and volunteers. In total 4 pharmacies were visited in the M15 area and a review was completed after each individual visit.
4. Across all services visited, we observed little signposting information to relevant services. Results ranged from no signposting at all, to just the most basic public health information being in place. Where signposting was available, it wasn't able to be verified for its accuracy at the time of visit.
5. No pharmacies were aware of the AIS and their need for compliance. On being presented with information regarding the AIS by Healthwatch Manchester all pharmacies accepted their need for compliance.
6. All pharmacies, whilst accepting compliance with the NHS AIS, showed a low level of compliance. Lack of resources was their overall reason for their inability to make reasonable adjustment.
7. The recommendations in this report will be used to achieve compliance with the AIS by local pharmacy in the M15 area.

Recommendations

1. Pharmacies in the M15 area need to provide facilities and resources which ensure compliance with the AIS.
2. Training for pharmacy staff around the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) should be made available and provided on a regular basis.
3. Investment should be made in resources to ensure that local pharmacies are in compliance with the AIS.
4. These reviews should take place on a regular basis and in collaboration with the GMLPC and CQC.

1. Introduction

1.1 Healthwatch Manchester are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to make sure that those running services, put people at the heart of care.

2. Background & Rationale

2.1 At the Healthwatch Manchester board meeting in March 2018 an action plan was agreed which authorised the AIS pharmacy reviews. Prior to this we had planned AIS reviews of GP practices following a piece of work showcased by Healthwatch Camden at the 2017 Healthwatch Conference. However, we decided to shift our focus to pharmacies following discussions with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), who were conducting their own AIS reviews.

2.2 Since August 2016, any organisation which provides NHS and/or publicly-funded adult social care services are required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The standard aims to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get access to the information they need.

Organisations are required to provide alternative formats where required, such as braille, large print, and easy read. They must also support people to communicate, for example by arranging a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, deafblind manual interpreter or an advocate.

2.3 The Equality Act 2010 was passed in order to provide further protections on top of the existing equalities legislation, such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.¹ The act places a duty on all service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that a disabled person is not put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a non-disabled person.² The act also outlines nine protected characteristics which help to protect people from discrimination, which are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnerships
- pregnancy & maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

2.4 As part of the Equality Act 2010 the existing individual equality duties (race, disability and gender) were combined to create one overall equality duty. Those who are subject to the duty are required, in the exercise of their functions, to consider the following:

¹ NHS England, *Accessible Information Specification*, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/accessible-info-specification-v1-1.pdf>

² The Equality Act 2010, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/20>

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.³

2.5 The interpretation of the equality duty by the NHS is the Accessible Information Standard. NHS England defines the standard as,

‘... a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents with a disability, impairment or sensory loss.’⁴

3. Methodology

3.1 Work commenced on this piece of work in October 2022 and was conducted by Healthwatch Manchester staff and volunteers. In total 4 pharmacies were visited and a review in the form of a written report was completed after each individual visit. Pharmacies visited included:

- ASDA Hulme
- Faith Pharmacy
- Manor Pharmacy
- St. Lawrence Chemists

3.2 Healthwatch Manchester representatives interviewed the pharmacy manager and the following Healthwatch Manchester Accessible Information Standard Checklist was worked through:

- Explain the basics of the Accessible Information Standard and ‘the need to do something if not everything’
- Discuss offering alternative formats to all patients and provide a suggested sentence if necessary
- Resolve where to keep large print forms available
- Discuss reasonable adjustments
- Show where to find Easy Read materials
- Explain the rules of Large Print (Large print is defined by the RNIB as being 16pt Arial or bigger)
- Discuss options for deaf patients: give information on BSL relay services
- Signpost to deaf awareness training and e-learning options
- Test the hearing loop. Provide information on options for buying counter loops etc.

³ Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Public Sector Equality Duty*, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty>

⁴ NHS England, *Accessible Information Standard*, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/accessibleinfo/>

4. Key Findings

- 4.1 Across all services visited, we observed little signposting information to relevant services. Results ranged from no signposting at all, to just the most basic public health information being in place. Where signposting was available, it wasn't able to be verified for its accuracy at the time of visit.
- 4.2 Easy-Read materials were not available in any pharmacy.
- 4.3 Hearing loops were not available in any pharmacy.
- 4.4 No pharmacies had a British Sign Language (BSL) relay/video service.
- 4.5 Most pharmacies suggested that they were able to make reasonable adjustments where needed, although we did not receive any direct examples.
- 4.6 Awareness of the Accessible Information Standard was non-existent amongst staff in all pharmacies.
- 4.7 All pharmacies expressed a willingness to comply with the NHS AIS.

Appendices

1. [NHS England – Accessible Information Specification](#)
2. [NHS England – Accessible Information Standard explanation video](#)
3. [UK Government Equalities Office – Fact sheet: The Equality Act 2010](#)



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