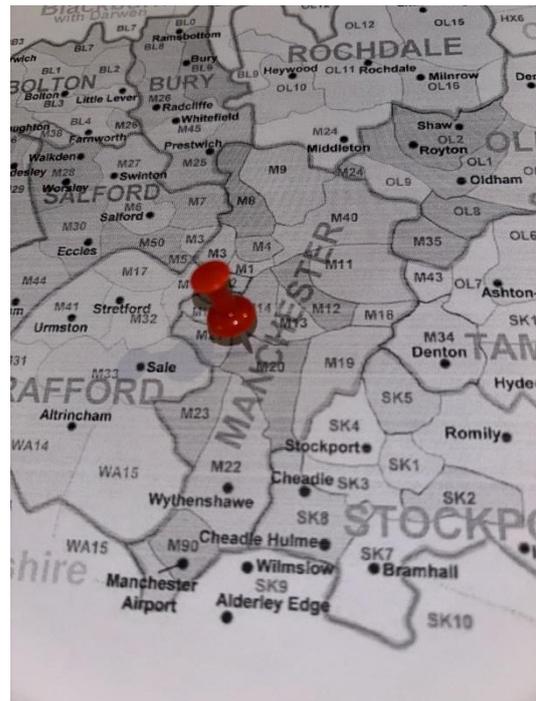


What's the SCRIPT?

M20



A report looking into the accessibility
of pharmacies in the M18 postcode

March 2024

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Foreword

Awaiting foreword from M16 councillors

Executive Summary

1. Since August 2016, any organisation which provides NHS and/or publicly-funded adult social care services is required to follow the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). This Standard explains how people who have a disability must be able to access information in a format they can use and understand and they should also expect communication support from health and care services.
2. At the Healthwatch Manchester (HWM) board meeting in March 2018, an action plan was agreed which authorised the AIS pharmacy reviews.
3. In total 11 pharmacies were visited in the M20 postcode area and a review was completed after visiting each individual pharmacy.
4. These pharmacies were located in the Didsbury and Withington area. All eleven pharmacies allowed us to assess their compliance with the AIS checklist.
5. Only two of the pharmacists we spoke to knew what the AIS is.
6. The rest of the pharmacists in the M20 area should use the information we provided to familiarize themselves with the AIS.
7. Only one of the pharmacies we visited provide a BSL relay service such as SignVideo for hearing impaired service users. Moreover, four of the eleven pharmacies we visited provided a hearing loop for hearing impaired service users.
8. The recommendations in this report will be used to achieve compliance with the AIS by local pharmacies in the M20 area.

Recommendations

More pharmacies in the M20 area should familiarize themselves with the AIS via the materials we provided them with.

The majority of pharmacies in the M20 area need to provide a British Sign Language (BSL) relay service such as SignVideo which provides instant access to British Sign Language interpreting through video conferencing.

The majority of pharmacies in the M20 area need to provide a hearing loop for hearing-impaired service users.

1. Introduction

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

1.2 Emerging from the Health and Social Care Act 2012, a Healthwatch was set up in every local authority area to help put residents and the public at the heart of service delivery and improvement across the NHS and care services.

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 is required to follow the 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 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 and these are:

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

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

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

2.5 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:

- 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

2.6 The interpretation of the equality duty by the NHS is the AIS. NHS England states that,

*'The Standard sets out 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 Equality and Human Rights Commission, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty>

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

3. Methodology

3.1 Work commenced on this piece of work in March 2024 and was conducted by HWM staff. In total, eleven pharmacies were visited and a review was completed after each individual visit. This report covers all the pharmacies in the M20 area.

3.2 Healthwatch Manchester representatives interviewed the pharmacist or pharmacy staff and the following Healthwatch Manchester AIS Checklist was worked through:

- Explain the basics of the AIS 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.

4. Key Findings

- 4.1 All of the 11 pharmacies allowed us to assess their compliance with the AIS (Accessible Information Standard).
- 4.2 4 out of 11 pharmacies provided a hearing loop for patients.
- 4.3 2 out of 11 pharmacists were aware of what the AIS was.
- 4.4 1 of the pharmacies provided access to a BSL relay service such as SignVideo.
- 4.5 All 11 pharmacies we visited provided signposting leaflets and posters to other services and charities.
- 4.6 4 out of 11 pharmacies we visited provided easy read materials for their service users.
- 4.7 7 out of 11 pharmacies we visited provided large print text for their service users.
- 4.8 None pharmacies we visited provided yellow and black labelling on their products for visually impaired service users.

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](#)

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Manchester thanks the eleven pharmacies who allowed us to assess their compliance with the AIS.

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