

Accessible Information Standard

What people have told us



easy
read

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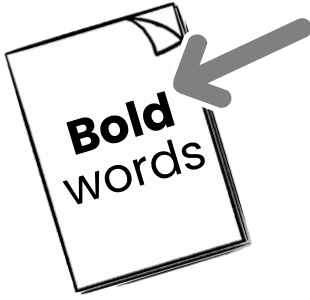
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In this Easy Read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after they have been used.



Some words are pink and underlined. These are links which will go to another website which has more information.

Introduction



We are Healthwatch. We work to make sure health and care services are the best they can be for the people who use them.



We have started a **campaign** called Your Care, Your Way.

A **campaign** is a plan of things to do over time, to try and change something.



Your Care, Your Way is trying to get more health and care services to follow the **Accessible Information Standard**.



The **Accessible Information Standard** is a law that says all health and care services have to:

- communicate in different ways for people with different needs.
- provide information that is clear and easy for people to understand.





We spoke to a lot of people about the Accessible Health Standard.



They told us that health and care services were not doing enough to follow the Accessible Information Standard.



This had got worse since the start of **COVID-19**.

COVID-19 is also called Coronavirus. It is an illness that has spread around the world. It can affect your lungs and breathing.



This information explains:

- what the people who spoke to us said about information they were given.
- what can happen if people are not given information in the way they need.



What people told us



6200 people spoke to us between April 2019 and September 2021.



Some people were getting information in a good way, but many more were not.

If people do not get information in the way they need, they might:



- feel unhappy and worried about their health.



- have to get help from other people to understand the information.

Here are some of the problems that people had:

Not thinking about people's needs



When services are made, some people's needs are not thought about.



This can stop them getting the care and support they need.



For example, some doctors asked patients who have difficulty hearing to book appointments over the phone.

Not enough support



Some services did not have basic support to help people with different needs.



This can make it much harder for them to understand.



For example, some dentists did not have **hearing loops**.

Hearing loops can help people with hearing aids to understand what people are saying.

Not remembering needs



Even when services asked about people's needs, and wrote them down, they didn't always support them enough.



For example, some services sent letters to blind people, who had asked for emails.



This meant that they didn't know about appointments.

Needing help from friends and family



If people are not given information in the right way for them, they often need friends and family to help them.



This makes them feel like they have less control over their health and care.



They may also need to share private information with others when they don't want to.

Knowing what patients should expect



Not knowing what patients should expect can often cause problems for staff and patients.

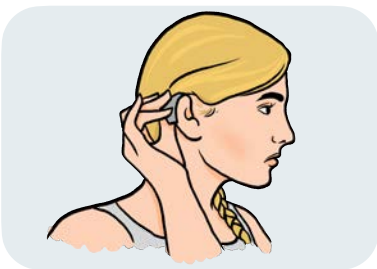


Sometimes staff don't understand what they should do.



For example, some staff members tried to talk to **D/deaf** patients by shouting.

D/deaf means the person is either Deaf with a capital d, or deaf with a small d. The two are different.



deaf means someone who finds it hard to hear.



Deaf people have been unable to hear all their lives and use sign language.



Doctors, nurses and care staff need training to understand people's information needs.

People told us that they weren't sure about:



- what their **rights** are.

Rights say how people should be treated. For example, you have the right to be treated with respect, and so do other people.



- what they should expect from health and care staff.



This made it harder for them to ask for support.

COVID-19



During COVID-19, the Government and NHS gave a lot of new information to people.



But a lot of this information was difficult for people with different needs to understand.



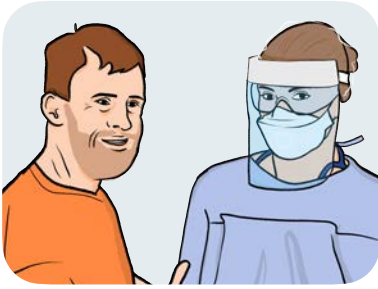
The Government spoke on the television every day to talk about the rules.



But they didn't have British Sign Language interpreters.



This meant that D/deaf people could not understand what they were saying.



Masks meant that people could not lipread their doctors, and missed out on important information.



There wasn't enough Easy Read information about COVID-19.



People were not allowed to bring a friend, family member or carer to health appointments.



D/deaf people were sometimes only able to have a phone appointment with a doctor.



This meant that they couldn't understand what the doctor was saying.

Services that met people's needs



Some services worked hard to follow the Accessible Information Standard.



Some services even did more than they needed to.



In Sheffield, staff wore visors instead of masks so people could lipread.



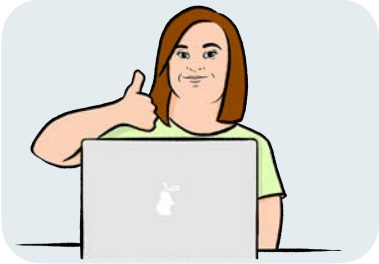
They also booked British Sign Language interpreters for anyone staying in hospital who needed it.



In Harrow, services worked with Romanian people to write important information in their language.



In Bristol, people could use their doctor's website in different languages.



This made it easier to understand for people who didn't speak English.

Changing the law to help more people



The Accessible Information Standard helps people who have communication needs.

But it doesn't:



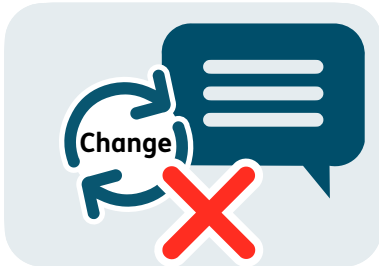
- mean that health and care services need to help people who speak a different language to English.



- make services give people information on computers in the way they need it.

People who don't speak English

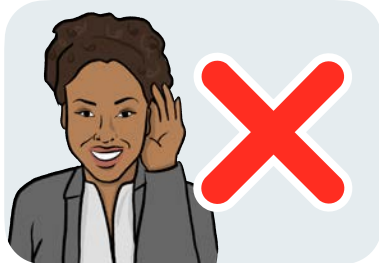
People who don't speak English told us that:



- services do not translate information from English into a language they speak well.



- they didn't always understand the rules during COVID-19.



- they felt that staff were rude to them and didn't listen to them.

Better information on computers



The NHS did much more on computers during COVID-19.



But the NHS didn't always think about people with different needs when they put information on computers.



Many doctor's websites had wrong information about using services.

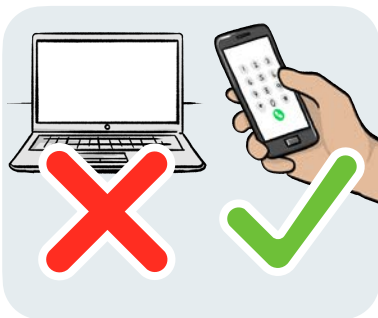


There wasn't enough information about getting British Sign Language interpreters.



Websites could not be read by a **screen reader**.

A **screen reader** reads out words on a computer screen. This helps people who find it hard to see.



Many doctors wouldn't let people book appointments on the internet, and made them phone instead.



This made it difficult for D/deaf people who needed support.

What we are going to do



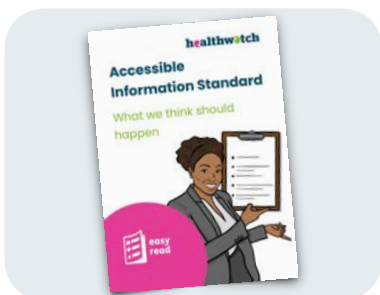
Everyone should have the right to be given health and care information in a way they can understand.



Services that don't help people to understand health and care information are breaking the law.



The NHS is looking at the Accessible Information Standard this year.



We have written a list of things we think the NHS should do. You can read it here:

www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2022-02-21/accessible-information-standard-our-recommendations