

Accessible Information Standard

Different types of accessible information and communication support and who may need them

Support for people who are blind or have some visual loss

A person who is blind or has some visual loss may need information which is usually written down or provided in standard print in an alternative format such as: audio, on CD or as an MP3 file, braille, email or large print. People who are blind, deafblind or have some visual loss may require information to be sent or shared with them electronically via email instead of in a written or printed format. The use of email enables the recipient to use their own assistive technology or software, for example a 'screen reader' which converts text to speech. Depending on the software or assistive technology used, a person who is blind or has some visual loss may require information sent to them electronically (emailed) in one or more specific formats such as plain text (with or without attachments), HTML, and with attachments in Word or PDF format.

A person who is blind or has some visual loss may need visual information in the form of an audible alert. For example, many blind people cannot read their name on a screen or notice and so will need to be told or guided to the appropriate room and / or seat.

Support for people who are d/Deaf or have some hearing loss

A person who is d/Deaf or has some hearing loss may require support from a communication professional, including a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, BSL interpreter who uses Sign-Supported English, Lipspeaker, Notetaker, or speech-to-text reporter (STTR).

A person who is d/Deaf may also need information which is usually provided in standard print in BSL video format. A person who is d/Deaf or has some hearing loss may also need support to communicate because they:

- Lipread – in which case the speaker should clearly address the person and face them whilst speaking, avoid touching or covering their mouth, and ensure conversations are held in well-lit areas; and / or

- Use a hearing aid – in which case care should be taken to speak clearly and a loop system may support conversation in reception or waiting areas.

It should be noted that the ability of d/Deaf people to read and understand written English varies considerably and it should not be assumed that having a conversation via written notes is an appropriate way of holding a dialogue. Similarly, it should not be assumed that because someone is wearing one or more hearing aids they no longer need any support to communicate, they may, for instance, be supporting their hearing via lipreading. The person's communication needs must be established with them in the first instance.

A person who is d/Deaf may need verbal or audio information in the form of visual alert. For example, many d/Deaf people cannot hear their name called in a waiting area.

Support for people who are deafblind

Types of communication support which may be needed by a person who is deafblind are as follows. It should be noted that many deafblind people will use a combination of different mechanisms to support communication.

A deafblind person may require support from a communication professional:

- British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, who may need to be particularly skilled to work with deafblind people who need BSL adapting in the following ways:
 - BSL interpreter - hands-on signing
 - BSL interpreter - visual frame signing
- Deafblind manual interpreter
- Speech-to-text-reporter (STTR)

A deafblind person may receive individual support from an identified professional to support them in communicating, such as a Deafblind communicator-guide or Deafblind intervenor. If so, it would be expected that this person would accompany the deafblind person.

A deafblind person may need written information in an alternative format, such as braille or via email.

A deafblind person may also need support to communicate using a communication tool or aid. They may also rely on the use of Tadoma to communicate or use a Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA).

A deafblind person may also use non-verbal communication including gestures, pointing or eye-pointing.

Support for people with a learning disability

A person who has a learning disability may need information which is usually provided in standard English provided in an alternative format such as 'easy read' or explained using Makaton.

A person with a learning disability:

- may require support from a communication professional at their appointment, for example an advocate.
- may also need support to communicate using a communication tool or aid. They may also have a 'communication passport'.
- may also use non-verbal communication including gestures, pointing or eye-pointing.

It should be noted that the level of a person's learning disability will have a significant impact on their ability to communicate and therefore level of support needed. People with a mild or moderate learning disability may be living independently and need information in 'easy read' format and verbal information explained more slowly and simply. A person with a more severe or profound learning disability is likely to be supported by one or more carers and will need additional support to communicate, including using a communication tool or aid. People with a more severe learning disability are more likely to communicate in non-verbal and non-traditional ways.

The Accessible Information Standard is concerned with ensuring that people with information and / or communication needs relating to or caused by a disability, impairment or sensory loss have those needs met by organisations providing health and / or adult social care. In the vast majority of cases, such needs can be met using 'standard' or 'standardised' alternative formats (such as braille), 'mainstream' contact methods (such as email), 'standardised' communication methods (such as British Sign Language) and / or other 'generic' adjustments (for example facing someone to enable them to lipread).

However, a minority of people with information and / or communication needs relating to a disability, impairment or sensory loss have multiple and / or complex needs, meaning that they require bespoke tools and / or communication support to

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enable or communication. Individuals with multiple and / or complex needs are more likely to use alternative and / or non-verbal communication methods, and may use a highly personal communication system, for example particular gestures or eye-pointing, which may require interpretation from someone close to them who understands them well.

In these instances, services should make use of the communication devices or tools usually used by the individual, and work with their carer(s), family members, support workers and others who know them well to identify and use communication approaches which maximise the involvement and inclusion of the individual. Services may find documentation of the needs of individuals with bespoke or highly personalised information and / or communication needs challenging, and use of a 'communication passport' or similar document to support standardised / coded recording would be advisable

Advocate: a person who supports someone who may otherwise find it difficult to communicate or to express their point of view. Advocates can support people to make choices, ask questions and to say what they think.

Accessible information: information which is able to be read or received and understood by the individual or group for which it is intended.

Alternative format: information provided in an alternative to standard printed or handwritten English, for example large print, braille or email.

Aphasia: a condition that affects the brain and leads to problems using language correctly. People with aphasia find it difficult to choose the correct words and can make mistakes in the words they use. Aphasia affects speaking, writing and reading.

Audio: information recorded from speech or synthetic (computer-generated) speech onto cassette tape, CD (compact disc) or as an electronic file such as an MP3.

Braille: a tactile reading format used by people who are blind, deafblind or who have some visual loss. Readers use their fingers to 'read' or identify raised dots representing letters and numbers. Although originally intended (and still used) for the purpose of information being documented on paper, braille can now be used as a digital aid to conversation, with some smartphones offering braille displays. Refreshable braille displays for computers also enable braille users to read emails and documents.

British Sign Language (BSL): BSL is a visual-gestural language that is the first or preferred language of many d/Deaf people and some deafblind people; it has its own grammar and principles, which differ from English.

BSL interpreter: a person skilled in interpreting between BSL and English. A type of communication support which may be needed by a person who is d/Deaf or deafblind.

BSL interpreter - hands-on signing: a BSL interpreter who is able to sign with the hands of the person they are interpreting for placed over their hands, so that they can feel the signs being used. A type of communication support which may be needed by a person who is deafblind.

BSL interpreter - visual frame signing: a BSL interpreter who is able to use BSL within the visual field of the person with restricted vision. A type of communication support which may be needed by a person who is deafblind.

BSL interpreter - Sign-Supported English (SSE): a BSL interpreter who is able to communicate using BSL signs but in the order that they would be used in spoken English. A type of communication support which may be needed by a person who is d/Deaf or deafblind.

BSL translator: a person able to translate written or printed English into British Sign Language (BSL), to support face-to-face consideration of a document, or for recording for use in a BSL video for example for publication on a website.

BSL video: a recording of a BSL interpreter signing information which may otherwise only be available in written or spoken English. A BSL video may be made available on DVD or via a website.

BSL video remote interpreting (VRI) - also known as video interpreting, remote interpreting or virtual interpreting: an online service in which a BSL interpreter interprets via video software. It works using a computer and webcam, a smartphone or tablet. Provided through contract or on demand by a range of organisations, it enables a direct connection to an interpreter so that the d/Deaf person can sign to them what they want to say. The interpreter then speaks this to the hearing person (via video link) and signs back their (spoken) reply.

Communication passport: sometimes called a communication book or 'hospital passport'. A document containing important information (usually) about a person with learning disabilities, to support staff in meeting those needs. It will include a person's likes and dislikes, and outlines ways in which they communicate. Many hospital trusts provide communication passports to people with learning disabilities.

Communication support: support which is needed to enable effective, accurate dialogue between a professional and a service user to take place.

Communication tool or aid: a tool, device or document used to support effective communication. They may be generic or specific / bespoke to an individual. They often use symbols and / or pictures. They range from a simple paper chart to complex computer-aided or electronic devices.

d/Deaf: a person who identifies as being deaf with a lowercase d is indicating that they have a significant hearing impairment. Many deaf people have lost their hearing later in life and as such may be able to speak and / or read English to the same extent as a hearing person. A person who identifies as being Deaf with an uppercase D is indicating that they are culturally Deaf and belong to the Deaf community. Most Deaf people are sign language users who have been deaf all of their lives. For most Deaf people, English is a second language and as such they may have a limited ability to read, write or speak English.

Deafblind: the Policy guidance [Care and Support for Deafblind Children and Adults \(Department of Health, 2014\)](#) states that, "The generally accepted definition of Deafblindness is that persons are regarded as Deafblind "if their combined sight and hearing impairment causes difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility. This includes people with a progressive sight and hearing loss" ([Think Dual Sensory, Department of Health, 1995](#))."

Deafblind communicator-guide: a professional who acts as the eyes and ears of the deafblind person including ensuring that communication is clear. A deafblind person may have a communicator-guide provided by a charity, through a personal budget or by their local authority.

Deafblind intervenor: a professional who provides one-to-one support to a child or adult who has been born with sight and hearing impairments (congenital deafblindness). The intervenor helps the individual to experience and join in the world around them. A deafblind person may have an intervenor provided by a charity, through a personal budget or by their local authority.

Deafblind manual interpreter - deafblind manual alphabet: a person skilled in interpreting between the deafblind manual alphabet / block alphabet and English. The deafblind manual alphabet is a tactile form of communication in which words are spelled out onto a deafblind person's hand. Each letter is denoted by a particular sign or place on the hand.

Deafblind manual interpreter - block: a person skilled in interpreting between the deafblind block alphabet and English. The block alphabet is a tactile form of communication in which words are spelled out on to the palm of the deafblind person's hand.

Disability: the [Equality Act 2010](#) defines disability as follows, “A person (P) has a disability if — (a) P has a physical or mental impairment, and (b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.” This term also has an existing [Data Dictionary definition](#).

Disabled people: [Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) has the following definition, “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Easy read: written information in an ‘easy read’ format in which straightforward words and phrases are used supported by pictures, diagrams, symbols and / or photographs to aid understanding and to illustrate the text.

Hearing loop system: a hearing loop or ‘audio frequency induction loop system’, allows a hearing aid wearer to hear more clearly. It transmits sound in the form of a magnetic field that can be picked up directly by hearing aids switched to the loop (or T) setting. The magnetic field is provided by a cable that encloses, or is located close to, the intended listening position such as a reception desk. The loop system allows the sound of interest, for example a conversation with a receptionist, to be transmitted directly to the person using the hearing aid clearly and free of other background noise.

Impairment: The [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) defines impairment as, “A functional limitation which may lead to a person being defined as disabled...”

Interpreter: a person able to transfer meaning from one spoken or signed language into another signed or spoken language.

Large print: printed information enlarged or otherwise reformatted to be provided in a larger font size. A form of accessible information or alternative format which may be needed by a person who is blind or has some visual loss. Different font sizes are needed by different people. Note it is the font or word size which needs to be larger and not the paper size.

Learning disability: this term has an existing [Data Dictionary definition](#) and is also defined by the Department of Health in [Valuing People \(2001\)](#). People with learning disabilities have life-long development needs and have difficulty with certain cognitive skills, although this varies greatly among different individuals. Societal barriers continue to hinder the full and effective participation of people with learning disabilities on an equal basis with others.

Lipreading: a way of understanding or supporting understanding of speech by visually interpreting the lip and facial movements of the speaker. Lipreading is used by some people who are d/Deaf or have some hearing loss and by some deafblind people. A person can be supported to lipread by the speaker clearly addressing the person and facing them whilst speaking, avoiding touching or covering their mouth, and ensuring conversations are held in well-lit areas.

Lipspeaker: a person who repeats the words said without using their voice, so others can read their lips easily. A professional lipspeaker may be used to support someone who is d/Deaf to communicate.

Makaton: a communication system using signs, symbols and speech. There are three levels of Makaton, used according to the individual's circumstances and abilities – functional, keyword and symbol reading. Makaton may be used by people with deafblindness or a learning disability.

Moon: a tactile reading format made up of raised characters, based on the printed alphabet. Moon is similar to braille in that it is based on touch. Instead of raised dots, letters are represented by 14 raised characters at various angles.

Non-verbal communication: communicating without using speech and instead using gestures, pointing or eye-pointing.

Notetaker: in the context of accessible information, a notetaker produces a set of notes for people who are able to read English but need communication support, for example because they are d/Deaf. Manual notetakers take handwritten notes and electronic notetakers type a summary of what is being said onto a laptop computer, which can then be read on screen. Notetakers are commonly used in combination with other communication support, for example people who are watching a sign language interpreter are unable to take notes at the same time.

Sign language: a visual-gestural language and way of communicating.

Speech-to-text-reporter (STTR): a STTR types a verbatim (word for word) account of what is being said and the information appears on screen in real time for users to read. A transcript may be available and typed text can also be presented in alternative formats. This is a type of communication support which may be needed by a person who is d/Deaf and able to read English. A STTR may also be known as a Stenographer® or Palantypist®.

Tadoma: involves a person placing their thumb on a speaker's lips and spreading their remaining fingers along the speaker's face and neck. Communication is

transmitted through jaw movement, vibration and facial expressions of the speaker. A type of communication which may be used by a deafblind person.

Text Relay: Text Relay enables people with hearing loss or speech impairment to access the telephone network. A relay assistant acts as an intermediary to convert speech to text and vice versa. British Telecom (BT)'s **'Next Generation Text' (NGT) service** extends access to the Text Relay service from a wider range of devices including via smartphone, laptop, tablet or computer, as well as through the traditional textphone.

Translator: a person able to translate the written word into a different signed, spoken or written language. For example, a sign language translator is able to translate written documents into sign language.

Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA): also known as a speech-generating device (SGD). An electronic device used to supplement or replace speech or writing for individuals with severe speech impairments, enabling them to verbally communicate.