

# Communicating with everyone

Healthwatch England's Accessibility Policy

May 2015



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## **Introduction**

We are the national consumer champion for health and social care services. It is vital that we communicate with everyone in a way that is accessible and does not discriminate or disadvantage. This policy explains how we will work to make this happen.

## **Legal requirements**

We are committed to making sure all our information is clear and accessible for everyone. We also have to meet certain legal requirements.

The Equality Act 2010 means that we have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, including taking steps to put information into accessible formats if a disabled person is at a substantial disadvantage if we do not do this. Also, there is a duty under the Equality Act 2010 which covers age, disability, sex (gender), gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexuality (whether you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual). In summary, those who are governed by this duty must take account of the need to:

- get rid of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- encourage equal opportunities between different groups
- encourage good relations between different groups

### **Physical environments**

All our public and external meetings and events will be held in accessible venues and where possible, facilities will include:

- Wheelchair accessible venues
- Induction loops
- Accessible lifts and entrances
- Appropriate car parking arrangements
- Clear signage
- Audible lifts / braille
- Quiet/break out areas
- Appropriate lighting

- Support from venue staff for health and safety information

## Information sharing

- We will use clear language and avoid any unnecessary jargon in every way we communicate
- All publications will include a statement about requesting the document in a different format or language and will explain how to do this
- We will try our best to meet every request for a document in a different format or language. There are some formats and languages that may take more time, and some complex or long documents may also take more time. We will respond to every request within one working day. Audio format (MP3 or WAV file) is available on request in a variety of RealSpeak voices and can be produced within 5 working days for all publications. All other requests can be produced be met within 20 working days.
- BSL and different language interpreters will be made available upon request
- When we publish our annual report, we will publish large print and easy-to-read versions at the same time

- We will make sure our website is as accessible as possible and continues to meet the standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium
- We will make sure that the images we use in our publications and on our website reflect the diversity of everyone we represent
- We will share our policy (when approved) with the network
- We will ensure that all of our staff are aware of this policy and how it affects them and the work they do
- We will regularly monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of this policy, and amend it as necessary
- We commit to working to ensure we achieve best value for money in delivering the policy

Policy: Accessibility

Policy Owner: Sarah Armstrong

To be reviewed: May 2016