



Dorset HealthCare Experiences of being a pilot site for the Accessible Information Standard

Opportunities

Teams may already be working independently on Accessible Information, for the benefit of their service users and staff. Use the Accessible Information Standard to give those staff further strength and impetus to progress their individual projects.

Staff are probably already meeting the service users need without realising. Use this as an opportunity to showcase existing practice as best practice and build upon it.

This is an opportunity to raise awareness about why and how we can identify and act upon the communication needs of patients.

Project Implementation

Set up a project team.

Have dedicated project support to ensure parity and consistency.

Meet regularly, at least monthly, to maintain momentum.

Top Tips 1

Provide access to a specific budget to produce accessible documents and resources.

Use and develop existing systems that people already use, don't create something new as people resent it and won't follow it through.

Don't enforce it on people but explain to them how it can help them assess and manage patients with additional communication needs.

Ensure the solutions are in place before you roll out the assessment. i.e. provide a list of common communication support needed and how to access it (e.g. easy read, large print, e-mailed documents, professional support).

Consider ascertaining service users' needs versus their preferences. In some cases, meeting their preferences ensures that we are engaging with them and their perceived 'needs'.

Top Tips 2

Make all information leaflets accessible for everyone. Save time and duplication by ensuring all leaflets are produced using symbols, images and words rather than having more than one version.

Ensure there is a process of approving, storing and reviewing patient information leaflets to avoid duplication and old versions of information being given out.

Develop a formal policy on how to assess and manage communication needs within the organisation, but provide a quick reference guide for staff to know what help to get and how.

Use terminology that is meaningful to your organisation, e.g. 'learning disability communication support worker' was replaced with 'Carer / support worker who knows me well'.

Involve carers.

Top Tips 3

Allow additional time for patient consultations initially, as this emphasised the importance of the process & standard.

Support staff with face to face training / awareness raising. Staff who were more involved in the work or received formal or informal training, had a higher level of understanding and engagement in implementing the Accessible Information Standard.

Produce information through a collaborative process, involving the person and their circle of support, in the same way that a Communication Passport is made. This would help to improve the consistency of reporting and recording, the quality of the information shared, and most importantly, it would increase the likelihood of the person getting the right communication support.