Accessible Information Standard

Flagging Information and Communication Needs

The third step for the successful implementation of the Accessible Information Standard is based on the establishment and use of electronic flags or alerts, or paper- based equivalents, to indicate that an individual has a recorded information and / or communication need, and prompt staff to take appropriate action and / or trigger auto-generation of information in an accessible format / other actions such that those needs can be met.

Overview of requirements – flagging of needs

A record of communication and / or information needs MUST be flagged or otherwise highlighted / made 'highly visible' to relevant staff when the individual has subsequent interaction or contact with the service (to enable appropriate actions to be taken to meet those needs).

'Highly visible' is defined in the Specification as follows:

"A recording of an individual's information or communication support needs must be 'highly visible' to relevant staff and professionals. In the context of this standard 'highly visible' means:

- Obvious and overtly apparent; and

- Visible on the cover, title and / or 'front page' of a document, file or electronic record; and

- Visible on every page of an electronic record (for example as an alert, flag or banner); and / or

- Highlighted in some way on a paper record so as to draw attention to the information as being of particular importance, for example in a larger or bold font, and / or a different colour."

Guidance for flagging of needs

Once recorded, the Standard requires that records that an individual has information and / or communication support needs are 'highly visible' and prompt for action to be taken to meet those needs when the individual next interacts with the service / when the record is accessed.

Where paper records are used, a clear process MUST be established such that all staff are aware of the correct actions to be taken in order to highlight such a record to their colleagues, and of the meaning of relevant notifications or alerts. This may include drawing attention to the fact that an individual has an information or communication support need by using a larger print, highlighter, sticker or other mechanism. Such information SHOULD appear on the front cover and / or front page of a patient or service user's notes, file or record (as appropriate). If a patient or service user's notes, file or record has multiple volumes, information or communication support needs SHOULD be visible on the front cover and / or front page of each volume.

Where electronic record or administration systems are used, a record of information or communication support needs MUST be flagged (or linked to an alert) to ensure that, once recorded, staff are prompted to respond to individuals' information and / or communication support needs and / or automatic processes are triggered in order that needs can be met, for example auto-generation of correspondence in an alternative format.

Although not a requirement of the Standard, automatic triggering of actions to respond to needs is preferred over manual processes which rely on staff awareness.

Guidance on reviewing and updating needs

As made clear in the Specification, once data is recorded about individuals' information or communication support needs, systems MUST prompt for, and staff MUST ensure that, such data is regularly reviewed and if necessary updated. Services should set up appropriate prompts and include review of this information alongside reviewing and updating data held in other fields, for example demographics, and as part of longer appointments, such as for a health check.

The purpose of review is essentially two-fold, firstly to identify if the individual's needs have changed (for example due to a change in their level of sensory loss) and secondly to identify if the most appropriate methods of meeting those needs have changed (for example due to advances in technology / a change in an individual's access to particular tools or technology). As an example, a person with some visual loss may initially request information in large print, but in future request information via email or in an audio format as their condition deteriorates / they gain access to relevant technologies.