Company Name: Integrative Supported Living Care

IntegrativeCare
SUPPORTED LIVING

Policy No: 03-1601	Authorised: Pellagia Margolis	Date: 15/01/2020

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COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT
IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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The Accessible Information Standard directs and defines a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting the information and communication support needs of service users and carers, where those needs relate to a disability, impairment or sensory loss. It is of particular relevance to individuals who are blind, d/Deaf, deafblind and / or who have a learning disability.

This Policy summarises the measures in place within the Organisation for improving the accessibility of necessary information and the techniques used to communicate this information. This Policy will support anyone with information or communication needs relating to a disability, impairment or sensory loss, for example people who have aphasia or a mental health condition which affects their ability to communicate.

A: THE *ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION STANDARD:*

Per *Policy No: 1600*, there are 5 basic steps which make up the Accessible Information Standard:

1.   **Ask -** determine / find out if a service user has any specialised communication or information needs relating to a disability, impairment or sensory loss, and if so what they are.

Suggested questions which MAY be used to identify if an individual has any information and / or communication support needs, can include the following:

• *Do you have any communication needs?*
• *Do you need a format other than standard print?*
• *Do you have any special communication requirements?*
• *How do you prefer to be contacted?*
• *What is your preferred method of communication?*
• *How would you like us to communicate with you?*
• *Can you explain what support would be helpful?*
• *What communication support should we provide for you?*
• *What is the best way to send you information?:*
• *Do you have difficulty hearing, or need hearing aids, or need to lip-read what people say?*
• *Do you have difficulty with memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand?*
• *Do you have difficulty speaking or using language to communicate or make your needs known?*

2.   **Record -** record those needs in a clear, unambiguous and standardised way as electronic and / or paper-based record systems.

3.   **Alert / Flag -** whenever the service user's records are accessed ensure that these needs are "highly visible", and prompted for action.

4.   **Share -** include details of the service user's information / communication needs as part of existing data sharing processes and information governance / *GDPR* frameworks.

5.   **Act -** ensure that the service user receives information which they can access and understand, and receives communication support if they need it.

B: TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF ALL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION:

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1.   *Introduction & Advice:*

One of the most practical ways of reducing the burden of implementing the Accessible Information Standard is to improve the accessibility of "standard" information / documents – which will in turn reduce (but never remove) the need to produce / provide alternative formats – and to improve staff members' communication skills generally. The following measures are intended to support Care Staff to make their information and communication more accessible and inclusive - they may be used as part of internal communications / awareness-raising.

2.   *Advice for clear face-to-face communication:*

- Make sure you have the person's attention before trying to communicate with them. If they do not hear you, try waving or tapping them lightly on the shoulder.
- Identify yourself clearly. Say who you are and what you do – it may be more relevant to explain your reason for seeing the person rather than your job title.
- Check that you are in the best position to communicate, usually this will be facing the person, but consider whether seated or standing is more appropriate. Communication at eye level is usually easiest so if you are speaking to a wheelchair user consider sitting down if possible.
- Find a suitable place to talk, with good lighting and away from noise and distractions.

- Speak clearly and a little slower than you would do usually, but do not shout.
- Keep your face and lips visible – do not cover your mouth with a hand, your hair or clothing. If a member of staff is concerned about religious expression they should discuss this with their manager.
- Use gestures and facial expressions to support what you are saying.
- If necessary, repeat phrases, re-phrase the sentence or use simpler words or phrases.
- Use plain, direct language and avoid using figures of speech or euphemisms.
- Check if the person has understood what you are saying. Look for visual clues as well as asking if they have understood.
- Encourage people to ask questions or request further information. Ask if they would like anything in writing as a reminder or reference.
- Try different ways of getting your point across. For example; writing things down, drawing or using symbols or objects to support your point.

3.   *Advice for printed communication:*

- Use a minimum font size of 12 or preferably 14 point.
- Use a clear, uncluttered and "Sans serif" font, such as Arial.
- Align text to the left margin and avoid "justifying" text.
- Ensure plenty of "white space" on documents, especially between sections. Avoid "squashing" text onto a page and, if possible, include a double-space between paragraphs.
- Print on matt and not gloss paper.
- Printing on coloured paper (cream, yellow, blue) may be indicated for individuals with dyslexia.
- Use page numbers.

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- If printing double-sided ensure that the paper is of sufficient thickness to avoid text showing through from the other side.

- Correctly format Word documents and *pdf*s using styles and accessibility functions / checks. Ensure a correct and consistent heading structure, and that the cursor can move throughout all text.

- Use descriptions ("alt. text") to explain diagrams or photographs.

- Consider making all "standard" printed letters / documents "easier to read" - using plain English, highlighting important information, and supporting text with diagrams, images or photographs.

- Keep track of the electronic originals of documents you print out so you can re-print in larger font or convert to an alternative format when required.

4.   *Using "Large Print" / "EASY-READ":*

4.1   Data items include those to record service users' requirements for information in "Large Print". Such codes specify font size and type of font needed.

4.2   Many individuals will ask for / require printed information in "Large Print" - i.e. a larger point size than "standard" (i.e. above 10 or 12 point). A minimum font size of 14 point is recommended, but some service users may require larger fonts such as 16 point or even 20 point.

4.3   "Sans serif" fonts are easier to read for most people with visual loss and for most people with a learning disability. A "Sans serif" font is one is one that does not have the small projecting features called "serifs" at the end of strokes. A well-known example is **Arial**.

4.4   Printing in a point size above 28 is generally considered to be impractical and unwieldy, and in most instances individuals' needs would be better met through the provision of information in an alternative format, for example audio.