Accessible communications policy

How we communicate with people in a way they can understand.

Please contact us if you would like this policy in another language or format (for example in large print, in Braille or on CD). Email accessible.communications@cqc.org.uk.
1 Background to our accessible communications policy

We are committed to putting people who use health and adult social care services at the centre of our work. This includes collecting and using their views and experiences, and making sure that they can access the information they need to make good choices about their care.

We want to make sure that everyone can access and understand the information we provide, and that they can communicate with us in ways that meet their needs.

This document sets out our policy for achieving these aims.

Accessible information and our strategic aims

Accessible information and communication are central to us delivering our strategic priorities. One of our strategic priorities is to “make sure that care is centred on people’s needs and protects their rights”. (Information from Our strategy for 2010 – 2015). We cannot achieve this unless we fulfil one of our main responsibilities as a regulator and report the outcomes of our work so that people have accessible information about the quality of their local health and adult social care.

To reach our target audience, we are committed to:

- publishing information about what we do and distributing it widely;
- providing information in clear and simple language;
- setting out clearly, in simple English, everything we write;
- making our website easy to use; and
- making our information available in different formats, such as easy-to-read format and in large print.

We are dedicated to improving access to information. In October 2011, we launched an updated website. We developed it after receiving feedback from the public and our website test groups.

“So much easier to navigate to the pages needed for guidance – a huge improvement.”

“Very useable and it is so much better than the old one, great, do not change it again!”

- A member of the CQC’s website test group
  October 2011

People who use services tell us that the accessible information we provide is central to them feeling involved in our work.

“I really appreciated the fact that the inspector respected me by using a British Sign Language interpreter.”

– A deaf resident from a care home
Accessible communications are essential for our inspectors to be able to collect and take account of the views and experiences of the people who use the services they inspect.

“The registered manager of the service had made a point of saying that one person who uses services would probably not want to talk with us as they do not usually talk to strangers. But this service user was put at ease by the interpreter and talked openly with us at length.”

– A CQC inspector who visited a care home on 17 January 2012

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; and
- encourage good relations between different groups.

The Health and Social Care Act 2008 says that we must:

- “Promote awareness among service users and carers of its functions
- Promote and engage in discussion with service users and carers about the provision of health and social care services and about the way in which [CQC] exercises its functions
- Ensure that proper regard is had to the views expressed by service users and carers, and
- Arrange for any of its functions to be exercised by, or with the assistance of, service users and carers.”

The White Paper ‘Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS’ states that we should provide information so that “patients will have access to the information they want, to make choices about their care”.


2 The general principles of our policy

We aim to make our information accessible in ways that meet people’s needs. We recognise that we have many different audiences that may need our information in various formats. Because of this, we have consulted on this policy with a range of people, including those who use services. We will do the following.

- We will use clear language in our publications and on our website, avoiding any unnecessary jargon.

- We will display clearly, on our website, using social media (such as Twitter) and in our publications, how people can ask for accessible and alternative versions of summaries of our information.

- When gathering the views of people who use services, we will provide consultation materials in a range of other formats.

- When publishing important reports, we will publish an easy-to-read and a large-print summary version of the final report at the same time. If the report is especially relevant to a particular group of people, we will also publish another appropriate version of the summary at the same time.

- We will make sure that the imagery of people that we use in our publications and on our website reflects the diversity of everyone we serve.

- We will make sure our website is as accessible as possible and continues to meet the standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium. (See Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/.) We will test its structure and content with people who use services to make sure that they can find and understand the information they need.

- We will consider whether we can meet our legal duties in a range of ways – for example information asked for in an alternative format or language may sometimes be communicated more effectively in another way such as, through face-to-face interpreting.

- We will promote this accessible communications policy, both outside the organisation and to our staff, so that people know about it.

- We will support our staff to use the easy-to-read picture bank and produce easy-to-read reports.

- We will regularly monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of our policy, and amend it as necessary.

- We will set aside the resources needed to deliver this policy, but we will monitor requests to make sure that what we do represents value for money. If this is not the case, wherever possible, we will suggest alternatives.
• We will routinely test our alternative formats and our website with people who have accessibility needs and we will record, monitor and put into practice their feedback as appropriate.

• We will achieve best value for money in delivering our policy. We will do this by using and reviewing preferred providers wherever possible, and making intelligent decisions about what formats to use and when.

• We will promote the availability of alternative format publications and hard copy requests on our website so people can make informed choices about their care.

• We will report on the number of requests we get for alternative formats from members of the public.

3 How we make decisions about producing accessible versions

The following guidelines help us make decisions about what accessible formats we will provide, and whether or not we will do so before anyone asks for them. It is based on the target audiences for each piece of information, and the importance of that information to them. The importance is based on what they need to know, understand or do to be able to make informed choices about care, or to get involved with us to help improve care.

A Public information

This is important information about our work that is aimed at people who use health- or social-care services. It includes information such as:

• who we are and what we do;
• the standards of care that people have the right to expect;
• our work to protect people whose rights are restricted under the Mental Health Act; and
• our complaints leaflets.

As well as the standard versions, we will produce these formats.

• Large print
• Audio CD
• MP3 for our website
• Easy-to-read
• British Sign Language video
• Tagged PDF, Rich Text Format (RTF) or HTML
• Six community languages. These are Bengali, Cantonese (Traditional Chinese), Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi (Indian origin), and Urdu. We can provide information in a wide range of other languages if you ask. Our list of six core languages is based on demand for each of the different languages from June 2010 to January 2012. We will regularly review our list, based on requests, downloads from our website and the change of profile of people who use care services.
Other formats which we will produce if asked.

- Braille
- Other languages

B  High-level information
This is summary information about our work that is likely to interest the public. For example, it includes consultation papers, investigations, statutory reports and reports from our national programmes.

Formats we also produce.

- Tagged PDF, RTF, or HTML text on website

Formats we produce if asked (unless the report is especially relevant to a particular group, such as people with a learning disability, in which case we would produce an easy-to-read version without anyone asking).

- Large print
- Audio CD
- MP3 for our website
- Easy-to-read
- British Sign Language video
- Any language
- Braille

C  Inspection reports
When publishing inspection reports for learning disability services, the compliance inspector will produce an easy-to-read summary version at the same time as the main report. This will be checked by their compliance manager.

Otherwise, you can ask for summaries of inspection reports from the Accessible Communications Officer in these formats.

- Large print
- Audio CD
- MP3
- Easy-to-read
- British Sign Language video
- Six community languages
- Braille

D Technical and professional information
This includes information and guidance about our regulatory and statutory monitoring work which is aimed at a professional audience. For example, it includes our guidance about compliance, which is a long publication that involves a detailed knowledge of the subject area. We would not normally produce alternative formats of this type of information.
It is the responsibility of care providers to make sure that their staff understand our regulatory model and guidance, and produce any particular summaries, translations or alternative formats that their staff need.

4 Helping people tell us what they think

To make sure that people who use services, carers and the public can give us their views when inspecting care services, we will:

- write in simple English, avoiding technical terms or concepts where possible, and explaining them when they are needed;
- make consultation documents available in a range of formats and languages and when we receive feedback in community languages, we will translate it into English so that the relevant inspector or department can use it;
- use a centralised system for booking interpreters for inspection visits or consultation events, so that people who do not speak English as a first language can give their views including British Sign Language interpreters for deaf people;
- tell our staff that alternative formats are available;
- give our staff access to a phone interpreting service so they can communicate with people in languages other than English in situations such as an unannounced inspection or if someone who speaks very little English calls the National Customer Service Centre for help;
- use social media sites, such as Twitter, as a way of increasing awareness of CQC;
- make alternative and other formats available to online communities of people with accessibility needs;
- produce guidance and training for staff about how to communicate with people who have many communication support needs; and
- provide the best possible access for public meetings and events in line with available resources. Our invitations and publicity for events will include contact details for asking for extra services.

5 Delivering our policy

All staff are responsible for helping to deliver this policy by communicating in a way that is accessible to everyone, including those who access information in other formats or languages. However, we also have a dedicated staff member who is directly responsible for delivering the accessible communications policy, including advising staff on how to put it into practice.
The Accessible Communications Officer is based in the Marketing Services team in the Strategic Marketing Directorate. Their role includes:

- assessing and meeting requests for other formats;
- giving guidance about accessible communications;
- arranging other formats and interpreters from preferred providers or others;
- working with the web team to make more accessible formats available online;
- producing easy-to-read and large-print versions of important publications;
- producing monthly statistics on requests;
- comparing our practices with those of other organisations; and
- making recommendations for updating this policy when necessary.

6 More information

For more information about this policy, including easy-to-read and other accessible versions of it, and to find out how to ask for information in accessible formats, please contact the Accessible Communications Officer.

Email: accessible.communications@cqc.org.uk

Phone: 020 7448 1796

Address: Finsbury Tower, 103-105 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8TG

Other resources and tools available for our staff to use

- **Accessible communications toolkit**: this publication contains practical information and advice about how staff can make sure that they are meeting communication and accessible information needs.

- **Communicating with people who use services**: this publication contains information and advice about how to communicate with people who use services if they have particular communication needs. For example, this could be people with a learning disability, dementia, or hearing difficulty.

- **Using the interpreting service**: this publication contains practical information and advice about booking and using our interpreting and telephone interpreting services.