Covid-19 – Using Inclusive Communication to help Scotland recover

Prepared by the Inclusive Communication Alliance, August 2020

This document sets out the inclusive communication actions **all** organisations should take **now** to reduce communication disadvantage.

It provides easy to follow instructions to help you and your organisations become communication inclusive quickly.

The guidance provided is an amalgam of the key points set out in the following published standards:

- NHS Access Standard
- Principles of Inclusive Communication Scotland
- Communication Access UK
- Easy Read
- Hearing Access Protocol

STEP 1: Acknowledge that every community or group will include people with different communication strengths, support needs and preferences.

- Make it clear to everyone that your organisation wants to get communication right for everyone in the communities they serve.

- It is your responsibility to deliver communication in a way that allows people to receive information, understand it and express themselves i.e. to be as communication inclusive as possible

STEP 2: Find out how people wish to receive, understand and express themselves.

- Treat people equally however they prefer to communicate – there is no "better" or "best" way.

- Find out about the communication preferences of all people you come into contact with – and more generally the communities you serve.

STEP 3: Match the ways your organisation communicates to peoples' communication requirements and preferences

General actions:

- Train staff in basic inclusive communication good practice – View the education and training resources on the Inclusive Communication Hub www.inclusivecommunication.scot/all-resources/education-training and /or contact your local Speech and Language Therapy services.

- Share individuals' communication profiles (with appropriate permissions) with relevant colleagues.

- Offer people a range of ways to contact you. For example, face to face; phone; text messaging; Relay UK; SMS; video; online; post.

Communication Environment:

- Offer the person the chance to meet at a location of their choosing.

- Use symbols and tactile markers on all outside and inside signs. View a summary of symbols sets on the Inclusive Communication Hub: www.inclusivecommunication.scot/symbol-sets

- Have spaces available that are peaceful, where you can adjust lighting, reduce distractions and where noise and echo is removed or managed.

- Use and /or adapt the equipment that you currently have

- Consider installation and maintenance of clear-sounding audio equipment, including loudspeakers, microphones and hearing loops.

Communication in writing:

- Ask yourself - do you need to write this, or could you use photo or picture or video (with plain English, voice-over, British Sign Language interpretation and captions) to show people what you mean?

If you do write things down use:

- A short main heading saying what the writing is about with sub-headings for each main point.

- Short sentences – minimum text, one idea per sentence.

- Active voice where possible, e.g. "You do this" rather than "This is to be done by you"

- Everyday vocabulary - no jargon or abbreviations.

- Order sentences and paragraphs in a straightforward way.

- Full links or a shorter link address for web links - not "click here".

Use a clear layout:

- Large print – at least font 14, headings in bold

- Symbols, pictures, photos to indicate meaning of main headings

- Use Alternative text tags to explain symbols, pictures, photos

- Leave plenty of space between sections – avoid muddle or clutter

- Use contrasting colours for background and text.

- Provide written communications in alternative formats such as Braille and audio recordings

- Online - meet BS8878:2010 Web Accessibility – Code of Practice.

Speaking face to face, in person or on video call:

- Has the person provided a communication profile? If so – plan, prepare and use the strategies they want you to use. It is your responsibility to adapt your communication style, not theirs. The person using the service cannot change their communication strengths for you.

- Make it easy for people to request and receive language and communication support, including speech-to-text transcription (i.e. live captions), BSL/English Interpreters, Deafblind Interpreters and communicators, lip speakers and electronic/manual notetakers.

- Expect, look for and respond to all the different ways people communicate e.g. talking machines, body language, objects.

- Let the person see your face, or eyes at least, if you are wearing a mask.

- Be aware of your volume, pronunciation and speed of talking – check people can hear and speak up if they cannot; speak distinctly; slow down if you are a fast talker.

- Match your facial expression, body language and intonation with the message.

- Use short sentences with one idea per sentence.

- Use everyday vocabulary – avoid jargon or abbreviations, but if you must use them, ensure they are adequately explained.

- Order sentences in a straightforward way.

- Use pointing, gesture and things people can see to back up what you are saying – show people what you mean.

- Have symbols, whiteboard or pen/paper handy so you and / or the person can write or draw what you / they mean.

- Give people time to process, understand and respond.

- Take equal turns in the conversation.

- Repeat, rephrase or offer to show people what you mean if people ask or do not appear to be understanding.

Speaking on the phone:

- Do as you would when speaking face-to-face.

- Be aware that it is commonly harder for people to hear and follow what is said on a phone conversation than it is in person. They may need more time to work out or process what has been said, so allow pauses and check you are speaking in a way that they can hear and follow.

- Be ready to receive Relay UK calls, video calls that support BSL Interpreting and subtitling text-based chat

SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO ASSIST COMMUNICATION

1. Accessible Phone & Video Services:

- ContactSCOTLAND – a Scottish Government service that connects deaf BSL users throughout Scotland through an online BSL interpreting video relay service (VRS). ContactSCOTLAND can be used by deaf BSL users for calls to any service provider (public, voluntary or private sector).

- Relay UK – an Ofcom regulated service that enables people with little or no hearing, or people with speech difficulties, to communicate with hearing people over the phone.   A relay assistant in a call centre joins the call and acts as an intermediary phone using the text-to-speech and speech-to-text translation services.

- Subtitling tools – a range of speech recognition software tools are available to provide automated subtitling for audio or video calls

- Video platforms – audio clarity on video calls can be better than on phone calls (assuming internet speed is good) and additionally allows people to see faces to take cues from facial expression, as well as lip and mouth shapes. It is important to ensure the face is lit well (but not in glare) and that the background is not 'busy' or distracting.

- Text facilities – SMS messaging services are heavily across the population and are particularly relied upon by people with deafness.

2. Staff training:

- Speech and Language Therapists, employed mainly by local health boards, offer "Inclusive Communication" training and support for organisations

- Accessible Information Awareness Training
  http://www.saifscotland.org.uk/training/#sthash.xy9vNI5h.dpbs

- Hearing access training, including: deaf awareness, hearing loops, acoustic environments, accessible phone/video calls
  https://www.ideasforears.org.uk/education-and-training/

3. Other Support:

- Inclusive Communication Hub www.inclusivecommunication.scot – this website is hosted by Disability Equality Scotland and is a rich source of information and resources on how to deliver information in an accessible and inclusive manner.

  You will find a selection of resources produced in response to Covid-19.