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| Your care, your way campaign: Template emails |
| 23 February 2022 |



Introduction

We have created three email templates for you to send to:

1. The voluntary sector
2. MPs
3. Health and care services

Email template

Email to voluntary sector or patient organisations

Dear XXXX

I am writing to bring to your attention the launch of the [Your Care, Your Way campaign](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/YourCareYourWay), launched on 23 February by Healthwatch and a coalition of user-led charities including SignHealth, Mencap, RNID, and RNIB.

As you may know, since 2016 health and social care services have a legal duty to identify and meet people’s communication support needs under the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). This means people have the right to information about their care in alternative formats including British Sign Language (BSL), easy read, or braille.

[New research](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2022-02-21/accessible-information-standard-findings-our-foi-requests) by Healthwatch England has found that only a third (35%) on NHS Trusts say they fully comply with the Accessible Information Standard. Thousands of people [have told Healthwatch](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/report/2022-02-23/are-people-getting-their-right-accessible-information) about how they continually struggle to access and use services due to a lack of communications support.

We are calling for:

1. Health and care services to be made accountable for fully delivering the standard.
2. Every health and care service to have an accessibility champion.
3. Better IT systems so that patients can update services with their communication needs.
4. Involving people with communication needs in designing better services
5. Mandatory training on accessible information for all health and care staff

You can find out more about our detailed recommendations to services and the NHS on the campaign page [here](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/yourcareyourway).

Given [our past work together on **XXXX** issue**//**your work on **XXX** issue], I thought you might be interested in supporting the campaign. If you would like to spread the word about the campaign today, you can [share our call to action](https://network.healthwatch.co.uk/guidance/2022-02-15/support-our-campaign-your-care-your-way) on social media or [sign up to support the campaign](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/join-our-campaign).

You may also be interested in attending the campaign [launch webinar](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/event/2022-03-02/your-care-your-way-%E2%80%93-improving-delivery-accessible-information-standard) on **Wednesday 2nd March 2022, 15:00 to 16:30**.

We are hoping to bring together service managers and people with accessible communication needs in a workshop to discuss improving implementation of the Accessible Information Standard in our ICS. I wondered whether you would like to discuss working together on organising this event? [Feel free to delete or insert your own offer or ask here]

Let me know your thoughts!

Best wishes,

Email to MPs

**mail to MPs**

Dear XXXX *[check how the MP prefers to be addressed on their* [*parliamentary profile*](https://members.parliament.uk/members/Commons) *under contact information]*

I am writing to ask for your support for the [Your Care, Your Way campaign](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/YourCareYourWay) to improve accessible information in health and social care, launched on 23 February by Healthwatch and a coalition of user-led charities including  SignHealth, Mencap, RNID, and RNIB.

As you may know, since 2016 health and social care services have a legal duty to identify and meet people’s communication support needs under the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). This means people have the right to information about their care in alternative formats including British Sign Language (BSL), easy read, or braille.

[New research](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2022-02-21/accessible-information-standard-findings-our-foi-requests) by Healthwatch England has found that only a third (35%) on NHS Trusts say they fully comply with the Accessible Information Standard. Thousands of people [have told Healthwatch](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/report/2022-02-23/are-people-getting-their-right-accessible-information) about how they continually struggle to access and use services due to a lack of communications support.

As the Health and Care Bill makes its way through parliament, we are campaigning to ensure that the new structure of the NHS has clear accountability mechanisms in place for implementation of the Accessible Information Standard.

We are calling for:

* Clear guidance from the Government and NHS England on the duties of ICSs regarding implementation of the AIS
* An equalities or AIS lead on Integrated Care Boards
* AIS requirements to be set out in all contracting arrangements
*

Our campaign also makes a wider set of recommendations to services and the NHS, calling for people with communication needs to be involved in improving communications support, improving AIS training for staff, and improving NHS IT systems to facilitate sharing of accessible communication data.

I would welcome a meeting or phone call with you to discuss how you can help raise awareness of people’s rights under the Accessible Information Standard and ensure that services are meeting their legal duty to provide people with healthcare information in a way they understand.

You may also be interested in attending the campaign [launch webinar](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/event/2022-03-02/your-care-your-way-%E2%80%93-improving-delivery-accessible-information-standard) on **Wednesday 2nd March 2022, 15:00 to 16:30**.

If you would like to spread  the word about the campaign today, you can [share our call to action](https://network.healthwatch.co.uk/guidance/2022-02-15/support-our-campaign-your-care-your-way) on social media or [sign up to support the campaign.](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/join-our-campaign)

Yours sincerely,

XXX

Email to health and care services

Dear XXXX *[consider who is the best person to write to]*

I am writing to you in your capacity as XXX [practice manager/equalities lead/etc] of XXX [service] to bring to your attention the [Your Care, Your Way campaign](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/YourCareYourWay) to improve accessible information in health and social care, launched on 23 February by Healthwatch and a coalition of user-led charities including  SignHealth, Mencap, RNID, and RNIB.

As you will know, since 2016 health and social care services have a legal duty to identify and meet people’s communication support needs under the Accessible Information Standard. This means people have the right to information about their care in alternative formats including BSL, easy read, or braille.

However, [new research](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2022-02-21/accessible-information-standard-findings-our-foi-requests) by Healthwatch England has found that many NHS service providers are not fully compliant with the standard. Thousands of people [have shared stories with local Healthwatch](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/report/2022-02-23/are-people-getting-their-right-accessible-information) about how a lack of communication support is impacting their ability to access care, leaving them frustrated, concerned about their health, and reliant on others.

We know that health and care services are still under a great deal of pressure after two years of the coronavirus pandemic. But as we transition to living with the virus, it’s vital that there is a focus on tackling health inequalities, given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

NHS England is currently reviewing the Accessible Information Standard, and our campaign makes a series of [national recommendations](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2022-02-21/accessible-information-standard-our-recommendations) aimed at improving the effectiveness of communications support.

But national policies only work if they’re implemented at a local level. A Freedom of Information Act request from Healthwatch England found that your trust is currently [only partially implementing the Standard**//**appears to be fully implementing the Standard, which is to be commended and could act as an example for other local health and social care providers]. We can work together right here in our community to ensure services have the right systems and policies in place to support people with communication needs.

*Would you have availability for a brief meeting to discuss how your service is implementing the Accessible Information Standard, and how local Healthwatch can support you to understand whether people’s accessible communication needs are always being met?*

[*Alternative text for above paragraph, or feel free to insert your own offer]:* *We are working with local Healthwatch across our ICS footprint to organise a workshop for service managers to discuss improving accessible communication support. The workshop will also include people with lived experience of sensory impairments and disabilities. Would you be interested in attending this event?* (or insert details/sign-up link)

You may also be interested in attending the campaign [launch webinar](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/event/2022-03-02/your-care-your-way-%E2%80%93-improving-delivery-accessible-information-standard) on **Wednesday 2nd March 2022, 15:00 to 16:30**.

Look forward to your thoughts!

Yours sincerely,

XXX

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