

# Principles of Inclusive Communication

An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities



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# Introduction

People with communication support needs can face widespread exclusion and discrimination. It is estimated that over a million people in Scotland have some form of communication support need.<sup>1</sup> This means it is a concern for all of our communities and public authorities.

Inclusive communication will enable people with communication support needs to:

- Gain full access to services
- Understand what service providers are telling them so that the advice, guidance and information provided by the services makes sense to them
- Be understood by services providers so that service providers provide better quality, more effective services first time
- Have a more positive experience of services and be less likely to challenge service providers
- Maintain the motivation to take up and stick with services that make positive changes to their lives

The principles of inclusive communication and linked performance indicators contained in this document have been produced to help public authorities make their communication more inclusive, and to help deliver effective, well organised and equally accessible services that provide value for money.

Inclusive communication can save both time and money for service providers and the people who use services, and can improve outcomes for people with communication support needs and the wider community.

Inclusive communication addresses the needs of people of all ages, people from different cultural and language backgrounds, and disabled people.

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<sup>1</sup> For information and data on the prevalence of communication support needs and people's life experiences, see 'Communication Support Needs: A Review of the Literature' available via the link below: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/179456/0051018.pdf>



## Background

This document brings together the knowledge and experience of people with communication support needs and service providers to offer a practical approach to delivering inclusive communication.

This work supports the Independent Living Programme. This programme supports disabled people in Scotland to have the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as other citizens, at home, at work and in the community. The programme is a partnership of Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), NHS Health Scotland and the Independent Living in Scotland Project (ILiS).

A working group of partners from the Independent Living programme, Disabled People's Organisations and other representatives from the public sector and voluntary sector developed this document. A full list of acknowledgements is on page 20.

## Purpose of the document

This document is designed as an information and self-assessment tool for public authorities. It is relevant to all modes of communication.

It aims to support and complement existing guidance and toolkits for inclusive communication. Refer to pages 16 and 17 for links to further information and guidance.

This document also identifies the links between inclusive communication, the Equality Act 2010 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

Inclusive communication is about recognising that a person might have communication support needs and to consider the best way to communicate to help them as an individual.

This document will help you to do this by:

- Improving awareness, knowledge and understanding of communication support needs, and
- Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours, and the importance of showing a willingness to change communication practices to make them more inclusive.



## Who should use this resource?

This document is for public authorities to use to help make sure their communication is inclusive. It has been produced to support leadership on inclusive communication across public authorities.

This document is for:

- Strategic and operational service leaders, who are responsible for delivering or improving services; service leaders or managers in customer services
- Staff with responsibility for monitoring and improving performance
- Staff with responsibility for organising events and meetings
- Staff who are responsible for communicating information, in any way, to the public

It is important that all staff have an awareness of inclusive communication and are adequately trained, especially those who have regular contact with people who use their services.

## Definition of inclusive communication

Inclusive communication means sharing information in a way that everybody can understand.

For service providers, it means making sure that you recognise that people understand and express themselves in different ways.

For people who use services, it means getting information and expressing themselves in ways that meet their needs.

Inclusive communication relates to all modes of communication:

- Written information
- Online information
- Telephone
- Face to face

Inclusive communication makes services more accessible for everyone. It will help to achieve successful outcomes for individuals and the wider community. It enables people to live more independently and to participate in public life.



## Definition of communication support needs

People have communication support needs if they need support with understanding, expressing themselves or interacting with others.

To meet their needs you have to be flexible in how you communicate and the methods that you use, for example by having information in audio instead of written form.

You will also need to give people the chance to express themselves in a way which suits them, for example by using pictures instead of speaking.

It may not always be obvious at first that somebody has a communication support need. However, if information is not accessible, a person may:

- Avoid services completely
- Not turn up for an appointment
- Respond to only some of advice given even after saying or nodding they understand
- Ask a lot of repeated questions
- Give irrelevant, unclear or rambling responses to questions
- Behave in a way which can present challenges to service providers. For example, a person with communication support needs might only see certain staff, or appear inflexible, unpredictable or unreliable
- Seem bored or have difficulty paying attention
- Express strong emotions that might appear to be inappropriate to the situation, such as anger, frustration, embarrassment, or anxiety
- Have difficulty describing feelings, events or needs in words that make sense





## Why use inclusive communication?

By using inclusive communication, service providers will ensure people who use services get access to them, use them and participate in improving them.

There are strong legal and business reasons for adopting inclusive communication.

Inclusive communication:

- Helps people in communities to lead independent lives
- Helps public authorities avoid discrimination

The business case for use of inclusive communication is clear. It provides benefits in terms of both cost and user satisfaction.

If services are designed around the needs of the people who use them, they will be more cost effective, user friendly and fit for purpose.

If the service provider is getting it right the first time, the people who use their services will understand and communicate their needs straight away.

## The Equality Act 2010 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) makes it unlawful for public authorities to discriminate against, harass or victimise employees and people who use services because of personal characteristics such as disability.

The Act requires public authorities to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people to avoid disadvantage and is clear that reasonable adjustment includes provision of information in an accessible format.

Public authorities are also under a duty to promote equality.

Providing information in an accessible format and supporting people to communicate in a way that suits the person will help a public authority:

- Meet its reasonable adjustment duties
- Ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged
- Promote equality

View the Equality Act 2010 at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> for further information.

You can download the Equality Act in Easy Read here:  
[http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality\\_act\\_2010.aspx](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010.aspx)

The **Statutory Code of Practice on Services, Public Functions and Associations** provides detailed information and guidance on reasonable adjustments.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (the Convention) is a statement of the human rights of all disabled people and covers all areas of life. Governments must report on how they will promote, protect and monitor its implementation.

Inclusive communication supports many of the Convention articles, but Articles 9 and 21 are especially important as they require disabled people to have access to information and communication in different forms. These Articles set out disabled people's right to find out and give information and to say what they want, the same as everyone else.

View the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at:  
[www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=259](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=259)

View in Easy Read at: [www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/publications/uncrpd\\_guide\\_easyread.Pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/publications/uncrpd_guide_easyread.Pdf)

# The six principles of inclusive communication

The six principles below will help you to make your communication more inclusive.

Following these six principles will help you deliver services more effectively and support people with communication support needs.

You may already consider some of these things, but using the principles together will help you think about all aspects of inclusive communication.

## 1 Communication accessibility and physical accessibility are equally important

**All people who use public services have the right to access them on an equal basis.**

**To make your services fully accessible means considering communication accessibility as well as physical accessibility in the traditional sense.**

### **Good Practice Example:**

When arranging an appointment or a meeting:

- Consider the individual or your audience and ensure accommodation is accessible
- Allow sufficient time to provide communication support as required
- Send out information or papers at least 10 working days in advance

This will mean anyone with support needs has time to make arrangements for any support they may need, both before the event and on the day.



## 2

### Every community or group will include people with different communication support needs

You should presume that every group you are working with, or expect to work with, includes people with communication support needs. This includes members of the public and your colleagues.

Inclusive communication should be considered at all times, whether providing information or planning an event, meeting or activity. Good communication practice will help you reach your target audience more effectively and allow people to access services on an equal basis.

#### Good Practice Example:

Some ideas to support people with communication needs:

- Some people may require the support of a British Sign Language interpreter or a palantypist
- Some people may require information in alternative formats, for example audio or large print
- Some people may need the support of advocacy services
- Some people may have difficulty using a phone and may prefer a one-to-one meeting with communication support
- Some communication needs are less obvious and other support may be required. This might include head and body language, simple gestures, photographs, drawings, cartoons or symbols
- To ensure you can provide communication accessible services, it is good practice to allow time to arrange different formats or communication support depending on the needs of your audience



# 3

## Communication is a two-way process of understanding others and expressing yourself

Quality service delivery is when the service provider and person who uses the service understand each other, and the person who is using the service is able to express their needs and choices effectively.

Everyone communicates differently. When somebody has communication support needs, it may take more effort and time to ensure that service provider and person who is using the service understand each other.

You need to:

- Match your communication to the needs of the people who use services
- Recognise and respond to the variety of ways that individuals may express themselves

### Good Practice Example:

- Use symbols on signs outside and inside buildings, or to represent service on appointment cards, information leaflets and letters
- Staff training - Ensure relevant staff are trained to effectively simplify speech and to speak clearly, and to support verbal information by writing down key words
- Allow time - Offer double appointments for individuals who will require more time, therefore supporting communication needs as required



# 4

## Be flexible in the way your service is provided

In order to match the way you communicate to the needs of all the people who use services do not take a 'one size fits all' approach.

It is important to consider how changes to the way services are delivered will affect the people who use them. A 'one size fits all' approach will not work, as one system will not meet the needs of the all the people who use services.

### **Good Practice Example:**

Think about how accessible your service will be, what methods are best and be flexible in your approach. Many local authorities are moving towards online service delivery because it is cost effective and efficient. This may be a good option for the majority of people who use services, but can present barriers to people with communication support needs. Make sure good quality service is available offline too.

# 5

## Effective user involvement will include the participation of people with different communication support needs

To help you identify the full implications of service changes for all members of the community, involve people who use these services, including people with communication support needs, from the beginning of the change process.

Services delivered around the needs of the people who use them will be more cost effective, user friendly and fit for purpose.

It is important that people with communication support needs have the opportunity to participate in the change process in the same way that others can.

### Good Practice Example:

When planning a service change, think about how to support everybody to ensure they can be involved. This may mean training for staff before a consultation, or interpretation and translation and other forms of communication support available during a consultation. Although this may incur additional costs, the benefits of getting the change right first time will provide a more economic outcome in the long term. Remember, change needs to be monitored and reviewed, with continual improvement based on user feedback.

# 6

## Keep trying

Small, simple changes to the way you communicate will make a big difference to your service delivery. Some changes may take longer, but will deliver positive outcomes, resulting in cost efficiencies and an increase in user satisfaction.



## The self-assessment tool

The 10 performance indicators overleaf provide a self-assessment tool which will help service providers measure their organisation's performance against the six principles in this document. They will also provide an understanding of how to work toward best practice to deliver inclusive communication.

These indicators cover hard data and service user perception. They have been identified to fit easily into the self-assessment models and frameworks that public authorities already use. For example, the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF). See the appendix for mapping of these indicators with PSIF.

You may also wish to incorporate these indicators into your Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), as communication is a fundamental part of all elements of service delivery.

These indicators cover:

- Data gathering
- Service user perception
- What the service does
- What the service achieves
- Quantitative and qualitative information



# The 10 performance indicators

## Indicator 1: Public commitment

Senior Management will give a visible and public commitment to deliver services that support inclusive communication.

## Indicator 2: Data collection on need

Service uses a range of data sources and statistics to show they fully understand the range of communication support needs of the people in their area.

## Indicator 3: Inclusive communication review

Percentage of services that have undertaken an inclusive communication review. For example, by using appropriate self-assessment frameworks and/or as part of an Equality Impact Assessment.

## Indicator 4: Service development

Demonstrate range of people with communication support needs for whom services have been fully adapted or where services are being developed.

## Indicator 5: Staff training

Percentage of all staff who have undergone specific training on recognising and responding to a wide range of communication support needs.

## Indicator 6: User involvement (quantitative measure)

Percentage of service development and review processes that have included people with diverse communication support needs, reflective of local area population needs.



### **Indicator 7: User involvement (qualitative measure)**

Percentage of people with communication support needs who are involved in service development and review processes satisfied with their overall input to process of change.

Service must demonstrate that the method used to capture this feedback is accessible to all who should respond.

### **Indicator 8: Matching communication to service users' needs**

Percentage of people with communication support needs who use services who agree their needs and preferences were responded to sensitively when interacting with the service.

Service must demonstrate that the method used to capture this feedback is accessible to all who should respond.

### **Indicator 9: Use of services**

Percentage of people with communication support needs who access or use services, reflective of local area population.

### **Indicator 10: Annual improvement**

Year-on-year results which demonstrate improvement to meet all of the above indicators.

## Links to further guidance and information

For further information and data on prevalence of communication support needs, follow the link below for 'Communication Support Needs: A Review of the Literature'. The report also details the life experience of people with communication support needs.

**<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/179456/0051018.pdf>**

For further information about who may have communication support needs and a list of conditions from which they may arise, click on 'Talk for Scotland Toolkit' at:

**<http://www.communicationforumscotland.org.uk>**

For further guidance and to find out more about how you can improve your communication, particularly for specific groups, please refer to the information below:

Autistic Spectrum Disorder

**<http://www.autism.org.uk>**

Best Value Toolkit: Equalities, Audit Scotland, July 2010

**[http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/best\\_value/2010/bv\\_100809\\_equalities\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/best_value/2010/bv_100809_equalities_toolkit.pdf)**

Best Value Toolkit: Customer Focus, Audit Scotland, July 2010

**[http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/best\\_value/2010/bv\\_100809\\_customer\\_focus\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/best_value/2010/bv_100809_customer_focus_toolkit.pdf)**

Changing Faces

**<http://www.changingfaces.org.uk>**

Communication Forum Scotland (Talk for Scotland toolkit):

**<http://www.communicationforumscotland.org.uk>**

Deafblind Scotland

**<http://www.deafblindscotland.org.uk>**

Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF):

**<http://www.saifscotland.org.uk>**



Enable Scotland 'Accessible Information Unit'

**<http://www.enable.org.uk>**

The Office for Disability Issues, information on 'Delivering Inclusive Communication'

**<http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk>**

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

**<http://www.rcslt.org>**

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), in particular their 'See It Right' Guidance:

**<http://www.rnib.org.uk>**

Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD)

**<http://www.sclld.org.uk>**

Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) publications:

**[http://www.scod.org.uk/SCoD\\_publications-i-127.html](http://www.scod.org.uk/SCoD_publications-i-127.html)**

SCoD Directory:

**<http://www.scod.org.uk/Directory-i-143.html>**

The Scottish Disability Equality Forum guidance on producing material in an accessible format

**<http://www.sdef.org.uk>**

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

**<http://www.siaa.org.uk>**

UPDATE, Scotland's national disability information provider

**<http://www.update.org.uk>**

Website Accessibility from Web Accessibility Initiative

**<http://www.w3.org/WA>**

# Appendix

## Performance Indicators and Public Service Improvement Framework

### Inclusive Communication Indicator

### PSIF Criterion

#### Public commitment

1. Senior Management will give a visible and public commitment to deliver services that support inclusive communication.

#### 1c2

There is a commitment from leaders to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and these leaders actively support and advocate for this.

#### Data collection on need

2. Service uses of a range of data sources and statistics to show they fully understand the range of communication support needs of the people in their area.

#### 5a1

The service has developed insight about customer groups to better understand their needs and preferences.

#### Inclusive communication review

3. Percentage of services that have undertaken an inclusive communication review. For example, by using appropriate self-assessment frameworks and/or as part of an Equality Impact Assessment.

#### 6b

The service has a set of indicators, which link to the organisation's outcomes that measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the customer services strategy and processes.

#### Service development

4. Demonstrate range of people with communication support needs for whom services have been fully adapted or where services are being developed.

#### 5c1

The service evaluates how customers interact with the organisation through access channels and it uses this information to identify possible service improvements.

#### Staff training

5. Percentage of all staff who have undergone specific training on recognising and responding to a wide range of communication support needs.

#### 7b

The service has a set of indicators, which link to the organisation's outcomes that measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the people strategy and processes.



## Inclusive Communication Indicator

## PSIF Criterion

### User involvement (quantitative measure)

6. Percentage of service development and review processes that have included people with diverse communication support needs, reflective of communication support needs of local area.

### 6b

The service has a set of indicators, which link to the organisation's outcomes that measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the customer services strategy and processes.

### User involvement (qualitative measure)

7. Percentage of people with communication support needs who are involved in service development and review processes satisfied with their overall input to process of change.

### 6a

The service has a set of indicators that measure customers' perceptions, satisfaction levels and impacts.

Service must demonstrate that the method used to capture this feedback is accessible to all respondents.

### Matching communication to service users' needs

8. Percentage of people with communication support needs who use services who agree their needs and preferences were responded to sensitively when interacting with the service.

### 6a

The service has a set of indicators that measure customers' perceptions, satisfaction levels and impacts.

Service must demonstrate that the method used to capture this feedback is accessible to all respondents.

### Use of services

9. Percentage of people with communication support needs who access or use services, reflective of local area population.

### 6b

The service has a set of indicators, which link to the organisation's outcomes that measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the customer services strategy and processes.

### Annual improvement

10. Year-on-year results which demonstrate improvement to meet all of the above indicators.

Will be covered as part of the scoring criteria for the indicators above.

# Acknowledgements

This document could not have been completed without the valuable input of:

- The Improvement Service
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- Independent Living in Scotland Project (ILiS)
- Civic Participation Network (CPN)
- Communication Forum Scotland (CFS)
- Fife Council
- NHS Health Scotland
- NHS Fife
- People First Scotland
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)
- Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF)
- Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD)
- Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD)
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- Service providers who tested this document
- Volunteers with diverse communication support needs who tested this document



## Further information about this work

This work fulfils part of the Independent Living in Scotland Programme priorities contained within the programme work plan.

Members from the Independent Living in Scotland Programme partnership, Disabled People's Organisations and other representatives from the public sector and third sector, in co-production with the Improvement Service, developed this document.

The document is shaped by an Inclusive Communication Working Group, formed to oversee this project, and from additional consultation to encapsulate a wider network, held between December 2010 and February 2011.

The consultation was responded to by service users with a range of communication support needs, as well as service providers and impairment groups. A full consultation report is available upon request.



If you want more information about this document, the Independent Living in Scotland Programme, or a copy of the consultation report, please contact the Scottish Government Equality Unit at:

**[equality.unit@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:equality.unit@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)**.

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