

Communication Access Literature Review

Report commissioned by Speech Pathology Australia on behalf of the
Communication Access Alliance

December 2018

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Executive summary

In 2017 Speech Pathology Australia hosted an inaugural meeting of interested organisations and stakeholders to explore collaboration in the promotion of communication accessibility and to scope the potential development of Australian communication access standards. Subsequently, the Communication Access Alliance (CAA) was formed and initial meetings undertaken to establish key priorities and activities, to ultimately foster communication accessible communities. Recent work has seen Speech Pathology Australia, on behalf of the CAA, commission a literature review to determine the current legislative and policy context for communication support needs and to inform and guide the development of national communication access standards. The intention of this report is to provide an overview of the current situation in relation to communication accessibility in Australia and overseas, to describe the breadth of definitions currently in use, and identify where communication accessibility is cited and the context in which it appears.

Since its inception in 2006, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) has increased awareness and understanding of the rights of people with disabilities generally, both in Australia and internationally. Specifically, Article 21 of this convention has precipitated activities to uphold the rights of people with communication support needs resulting from disabilities.

Rights of people with disabilities is firmly aligned with the concept of access; the extent to which a range of barriers in society are removed to enable people with different disabilities to access the community and achieve full citizenship. At present, in most western societies, physical access is well entrenched in legislation, standards, and is evident in communities. However, communication access, a relatively new concept which focuses on social access when communicating with people, is largely unrecognised and therefore there is an absence of support at all levels for identifying and achieving communication access standards.

A literature review on communication access is challenged by inconsistency in use of terminology nationally and internationally. In addition, defining and quantifying the population for whom communication access is relevant also remains challenging.

A review of legislation nationally and internationally highlights that Australia is lagging behind some other countries with regard to legislation which specifically addresses the human rights of citizens with communication support needs. Australia would benefit from adopting legislation, for example, such as that in Scotland and the United States, which makes specific provisions for people with communication support needs.

A review of research and grey literature regarding communication access reveals numerous challenges facing practitioners and researchers in this area. These include:

- challenges in sourcing relevant literature
- limited research evidence to support effectiveness of projects aimed at increasing communication access
- limited research evidence regarding best practice in relation to producing accessible written information.

There is increasing consistency in the argument for including all those who experience barriers to communication access when defining the population of people with communication support needs. This inclusive approach would include people with sensory disabilities and people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Similarly, there is an argument for including all forms of communication when considering communication access. This would include face to face communication, written communication, telephone and digital communication, and communication mediated by an interpreter or communication support person.

It is promising to see practitioners and researchers advocating for an increase in practices, research and evaluation related to communication access, as at this stage, this area remains poorly addressed in the literature.

There are some positive preliminary findings regarding outcomes of implementing communication access projects. It will be important to build upon the learning and current resources developed through these projects, as well as applying evidence as it becomes available to ultimately achieve communication accessible communities.

Summary of key issues

1. Lack of consistency in terminology nationally
2. Lack of information regarding preferred terminology nationally
3. Challenges in identifying prevalence of people with communication support needs
4. Lack of terms or standards used in Australian legislation or policy to specifically address communication access of Australians with communication support needs
5. Considerable variability between states and sectors with regard to recognition of need for awareness raising and guidelines relating to communication access for people with communication support needs
6. Need for increase in practices, research and evaluation regarding communication access, including face to face, written, and digital mediums
7. Need for consistency and clarification of meaning of terms, including population of people with communication needs in research
8. Considerable variability in the communication access standards and guidelines which are currently available.

Summary of recommendations

1. Determine preferred terms with relation to communication access for use in Australia and the definition of these terms
2. Advocate for preferred terms to be used by governments, peak bodies, service providers, and other relevant agencies
3. Adopt a broad definition of communication support needs which will
 - a. include and benefit the most people experiencing barriers to communication access
 - b. identify specific subgroups of people who have communication support needs, noting those with a communication disability being of a particular focus for this work
 - c. ensure the data collected on people identified with communication support needs is consistent and comprehensive, thus strengthening advocacy to meet the needs of this diverse group
4. Advocate for specific practices to address the communication access needs of Australians with communication support needs in the next National Disability Strategy and State disability plans
5. Promote examples of legislation, policies and practices which advance the rights and address the communication access needs of people with communication support needs nationally and internationally. These could be highlighted, recognised and shared with governments, government agencies, peak bodies and service providers to raise awareness of good practice.
6. Advocate for evaluation of practices supporting communication access to be prioritized on the research agenda in Australia
7. Communication standards and/or guidelines should:

- a. Involve a broad range of people with communication support needs in their development
- b. Be supported by government, ideally by legislation
- c. Support communication access for a wide range of people in a broad range of contexts including a range of communication modalities (for example, face to face, written, telephone and online including media).
- d. Be evidence based.

Conclusion

In recent years there have been increasing efforts to raise awareness, and develop programs, resources, standards and guidelines to improve communication access for people with communication support needs nationally and internationally. These efforts have effected changes in legislation in some countries to better uphold the human rights of people with communication support needs, though legislation in this area in Australia remains limited with 'access' tending to focus on physical access, or general access to information and communication technologies.

Despite numerous activities to promote communication access, there remains lack of clarity and consistency regarding terminology and the population of people included when considering people with communication support needs. There is also inconsistency in the existing communication access standards and guidelines.

Considerably more research and evaluation are required to determine which strategies and approaches result in the best and most sustainable outcomes for the broadest most inclusive group of people with communication access needs. Strategies and approaches need to be clearly described and documented in detail for replicability.

This Literature Review does not claim to be an exhaustive review of all possible literature and evidence and was conducted as part of a time-limited project.

Within those boundaries, this report provides a platform for future work in defining the scope, context and application of communication access standards to support full and effective participation within society of those with communication support needs.

Background

The Communication Access Alliance (CAA) was established in July 2017, following a meeting held to determine the interest of organisations and stakeholders to consider advocacy efforts to promote communication accessibility in Australia. This was initiated by Speech Pathology Australia (SPA), aligned with a key strategic objective of SPA to foster 'Communication accessible communities'.

The vision, values and key objectives of SPA are detailed in SPA's Strategic Plan 2017 – 2019, and Speech Pathology 2030: Making futures happen (see Speech Pathology Australia, 2016, 2017). The key aspiration and strategic goal of 'Communication accessible communities' is outlined in both documents.

The development of national communication access standards has been explored through meetings of the CAA, with it established that the current context of legislation, policies and standards with regards to communication access first needed to be understood. This literature review is the first step in this process.

Since the United Nations produced the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) in 2006, there has been growing awareness in Australia and internationally that considerably more work is required to uphold the rights of people with communication support needs resulting from disability.

A number of projects both within Australia such as the Communication Access Symbol (see Scope Australia, n.d.), and Internationally such as the International Communication Project (see International Communication Project, n.d.), aim to increase awareness and improve communication access for people with communication support needs. However, it is unclear what evidence is available to support existing or developing communication guidelines or communication access standards.

The intention of this report is to provide an overview of current legislation, policy, and evidence regarding communication access, and to describe the breadth of definitions, identify where communication access is cited and the context in which it appears. The report focuses on access to communities and fostering of social inclusion rather than access to services, technology and resources.

Method

The integrative review framework described by Whittemore and Knafl (2005) was used, as this method of literature review allows for the inclusion of diverse data sources in order to provide a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the topic being researched.

The review method was also informed by the procedures outlined by Schlosser, Wendt, Angermeier, and Shetty (2005), who identify that because of the interdisciplinary nature of communication access, the relevant literature is scattered across numerous sources in a variety of larger fields. This makes searching for evidence and best practices challenging, so a number of sources are required. In compiling the information reported in this review, sources included:

- a search of relevant databases (specified below);
- a review of government legislation, policy and planning documents nationally and internationally
- personal contact with certain members of the International Communication Project, International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, Access Easy English, Deafblind International Research Network, and the reference group.

Literature Search

The following databases were searched from October to December 2018: EBSCOhost, Cochrane Library, Scopus, ProQuest and Google Scholar.

Combinations of search terms included:

"communication disability" OR "communication disorder" OR "communication impairment" OR "communication difficulty" OR "complex communication needs" OR "communication support needs" OR "complex communication support needs" OR "communication", AND access* OR friendly, AND "social inclusion" OR "inclusive communication" OR "communication participation" OR inclus*

Searches in ProQuest and Google Scholar were limited by searching for key words in abstract only, or title only.

A search for relevant Australian legislation was undertaken using google with search terms that included "Australia/n" OR "(name of State e.g. Victoria/n" AND "law" OR "legislation" OR "act", AND "disability". Specific searches were also made for each State and Territories current disability action plan, as well as State specific communication standards or guidelines.

Each government document was searched using the terms 'communication access, and 'communication'.

Finally, information from personal contacts listed above, was requested regarding current legislation, policies, standards, guidelines and research evidence relevant to communication access.

Inclusion Criteria and Selection Process

Studies were included if they:

- had a specific focus on communication access
- were written in English

Studies were excluded if they were:

- primary research
- a conference abstract

Next, an iterative process commenced during which additional references were identified by searching the reference lists and citations of relevant papers. Relevant 'grey literature' such as project reports found through internet searching was also included.

The database searches yielded 33 results, 9 of which were duplicates. The 24 articles were reviewed in relation to the study's inclusion / exclusion criteria, leaving 16 articles for analysis. Iterative searches of reference lists of included articles (snowballing), author searches and internet searches for "grey literature", as well as references provided by the reference group and personal contacts yielded a further 14 references, making a total of 30 for review. The list of included references and sources are included in Appendix A.

Data evaluation

As the current integrative review used a diverse sampling frame and included empirical, non-empirical and theoretical sources, an approach to evaluating quality similar to historical research, as described by Whitemore (2005) was applied. The authenticity, methodological quality, informational value, and representativeness of the data sources was evaluated. No articles were excluded based on the data evaluation, however, articles evaluated as less strong on the abovementioned features contributed less to the process of analysis.

Data Analysis

Information was extracted from the included documents on population, terminology, and evidence-based practices to facilitate communication access, as well as any reference to the concepts of communication access or communication access standards, and key discussion points.

Findings

Terminology

There are two aspects of terminology which need to be considered with regard to communication access. The first is to define what is meant by the different terms currently in use, and the second is to decide on the term to be used within the Australian context.

When discussing communication access, there are two aspects which need to be defined and agreed upon. The first is to define and name the population of people who experience barriers to communication, and the second is to define and name the features of a communication accessible environment.

There are a variety of terms used internationally and nationally to refer to people, processes, and environments related to communication access. Solarsh and Johnson (2017b) identified 12 terms; 6 which refer to communication characteristics of the individual, and 6 which refer to the environment.

Table 1. Terms identified by Solarsh and Johnson (2017b)

Term used to refer to the person	Terms used to refer to the environment
Communication disorder	Aphasia friendly
Communication difficulty / impairment	Autism friendly
Communication difficulty	Dementia friendly
Complex communication needs	Communication friendly
Communication support needs	Communication access
Complex communication support needs	Inclusive communication

Terms used to describe individuals who experience barriers to communication access

This report identified 6 terms used to describe individuals who experience barriers to communication. These are people with / a; communication disability, communication impairment, communication disorder, communication difficulty, communication support needs, complex communication needs, complex communication support needs.

Tables 2 and 3 show the variety of terms currently in use, and the countries, organisations and authors using them.

Table 2. Term used to describe people experiencing barriers to communication access

	Communication disability	Communication difficulty	Communication impairment	Communication disorder	Communication Support Needs	Complex Communication Support Needs
SPA	X	X	X	X	X	X
Australian Bureau of Statistics	X					
Scope / Communication Access Network		X				X
Royal College of Speech Language Therapists					X	

National Disability Strategy (Australia)		X	X			
International Communication Project	X					
Americans with Disabilities Act	X					
Scottish government					X	
New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists Association	X				X	

Note: All Australian State and Territory disability acts refer to reduced capacity for communication resulting from disability rather than referring to communication disability, impairment, difficulty or support needs.

Terms used to describe process of removing barriers to communication access

Solarsh and Johnson (2017b) in their review of terminology, included terms that referred to specific communication disorders such as ‘aphasia friendly’, and ‘autism friendly’. The current review is taking a broader approach, so only terms relevant to the broader population of people with communication support needs are included below.

Table 3. Terms used to describe process and experience of removing barriers to communication

	Communication access (ible)	Inclusive communication	Communication friendly	Effective communication	Successful communication
SPA	X	X			
Scope / Communication Access Network	X				
Royal College of Speech Language Therapists	X	X			
Americans with Disabilities Act				X	
Canadian Government					X
Scottish Government		X			
New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists Association	X				

Note: No Australian government legislation or planning documents reviewed make any mention of ‘communication access’, ‘inclusive communication’, or ‘communication friendly’ environments.

Use of terminology in this report

In this report, the term ‘communication support needs’ will be used to describe people experiencing barriers to communication access and the definition used by Law et al. (2007) will be adopted:

“People with communication support needs have difficulties associated with one or more aspects of communication. Communication refers to all aspects of interpersonal communication. This includes verbal understanding, expressive language, speech and the capacity to understand someone’s intended meaning rather than the words themselves. It also

refers to literacy and other means by which individuals interact with one another.”
(Law et al., 2007, p. 6)

The term ‘communication support needs’ better reflects the social model of disability in contrast to the medical model which rests the disability with the individual rather than their environment. This term has the benefit of emphasising the needs arising out of the communication disability rather than the disability itself, and places the onus on others to find ways to communicate with, listen to, and find out the preferences of the individual. Finally, it emphasises the fact that there may be more differences within any group of people with disability ie. at the level of the individual than between different diagnostic group. Thus, it emphasises person-centred rather than generic models of care.

The term ‘communication access’ will be used as this is the term currently most used in Australia by SPA, Scope, and the Communication Access Alliance.

It is important to note that these are not necessarily the terms which will ultimately be used in Australia by Speech Pathology Australia or the Communication Access Alliance.

It remains unclear what terminology is being used most commonly by speech pathologists, disability peak bodies, disability service providers, and people with communication support needs across Australia. It is also unclear whether regional differences in terminology use exist across Australia as was found in a survey of terminology use across the United Kingdom (see Money et al., 2016).

Money et al. (2016, p. 37) make the important point that “using common terminology and standards locally will make it easier to compare service evaluations, audits and research findings”.

KEY ISSUES

1. Lack of consistency in terminology relating to communication access nationally and internationally
2. Lack of information regarding preferred terminology nationally

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Determine preferred terms relating to communication access for use in Australia and the definition of these terms.
2. Advocate for preferred terms to be used by governments, peak bodies, service providers, and other relevant agencies

Population

While use of terminology is inconsistent, there is some statistical data on numbers of people within subgroups of individuals who make up the broader group of people with communication support needs.

Law et al. (2007) list potential subgroups of people with communication support needs. These are listed in Appendix H with more current or Australian terminology in brackets.

Some examples of subgroups include people with:

- Neurological disorders
- Sensory disorders
- Neurodevelopmental disorders
- Syndromes and birth defects
- Language, learning and literacy disorders and difficulties
- Communication disorders

Data on prevalence on all of these groups was not sought, and what is reported here is data which were reported in the documents reviewed.

Law et al. (2007) note four challenges in obtaining definitive numbers of people with communication support needs:

1. While data are available for the prevalence of communication need in some of the sub groups identified, there is not yet a recognised definition of communication support needs developed sufficiently to be used at a population level.
2. The definition of 'communication support needs' is, to a large extent, socially rather than objectively determined, so the extent to which something is a need is partially determined by the individual's recognition that they have such a need and this is partially a function of the extent to which their community responds to that need.
3. The pattern of difficulties experienced can change across time as the need increases or decreases, and
4. Any estimate of communication support need is related to the existing services and whether they seek to identify the group concerned.

The National Disability Strategy stipulates that Australian data collected regarding disability must include figures about communication disability. This data is collected through the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.

In 2015 it was estimated that 1.2 million Australians had some level of communication disability, ranging from those who function without difficulty in communicating every day but who use a communication aid, to those who cannot understand or be understood at all (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

A trend has been noted over the past 15 years, that correlates an increase in the number of people with communication support needs with the increases in the aging population. Enderby, Judge, Creer, and John (2013) identify that 45.9% of the total number of people who could benefit from Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) consist of people with Alzheimer's/Dementia and those with Parkinson's disease, both conditions associated with an older population. Given the population is ageing, and that there are other conditions associated with ageing that result in communication support needs, it is probable that numbers of people with communication support needs will rise considerably. This trend is reflected in data from the 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers which indicates the number of people with a communication disability has increased, from 883,600 in 2003 to 1,175,200 in 2015, driven largely by an increase in the number of people aged 65 years and over with communication disability from 511,500 people in 2003 to 753,400 people in 2015 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

The percentage of those with a communication disability in a given population will vary based on condition type (for example, the percentage of people who have autism) or setting (for example, the percentage of children who start school with a speech, language and communication need).

Law et al. (2007) note that while the prevalence of people with diagnosed communication disabilities may be between 1 and 2% of the population, up to 20% of the population could benefit from communication support at any one time. However, this figure does not include those people with literacy difficulties, despite access to literacy being included in the definition of people with communication support needs used by Law et al. (2007)

The potential population of Australians with communication support needs rises considerably if people with low literacy, and those from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds, are included.

The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, Australia, 2011-12, identifies 44% of Australians aged 15 to 74 years have non-functional literacy and experience difficulty accessing most written public information. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013; Basterfield, 2014).

“As there is limited evidence as to the differential benefits of communication supports, it is valuable to consider the communication supports that will achieve social inclusion for a maximum number of people with a variety of communication difficulties.” (Solarsh & Johnson, 2017b, p. 127).

Issues related to the population of people with communication support needs are addressed further below in the section on face to face communication.

KEY ISSUES

3. Challenges in identifying the prevalence of people with communication support needs

RECOMMENDATIONS

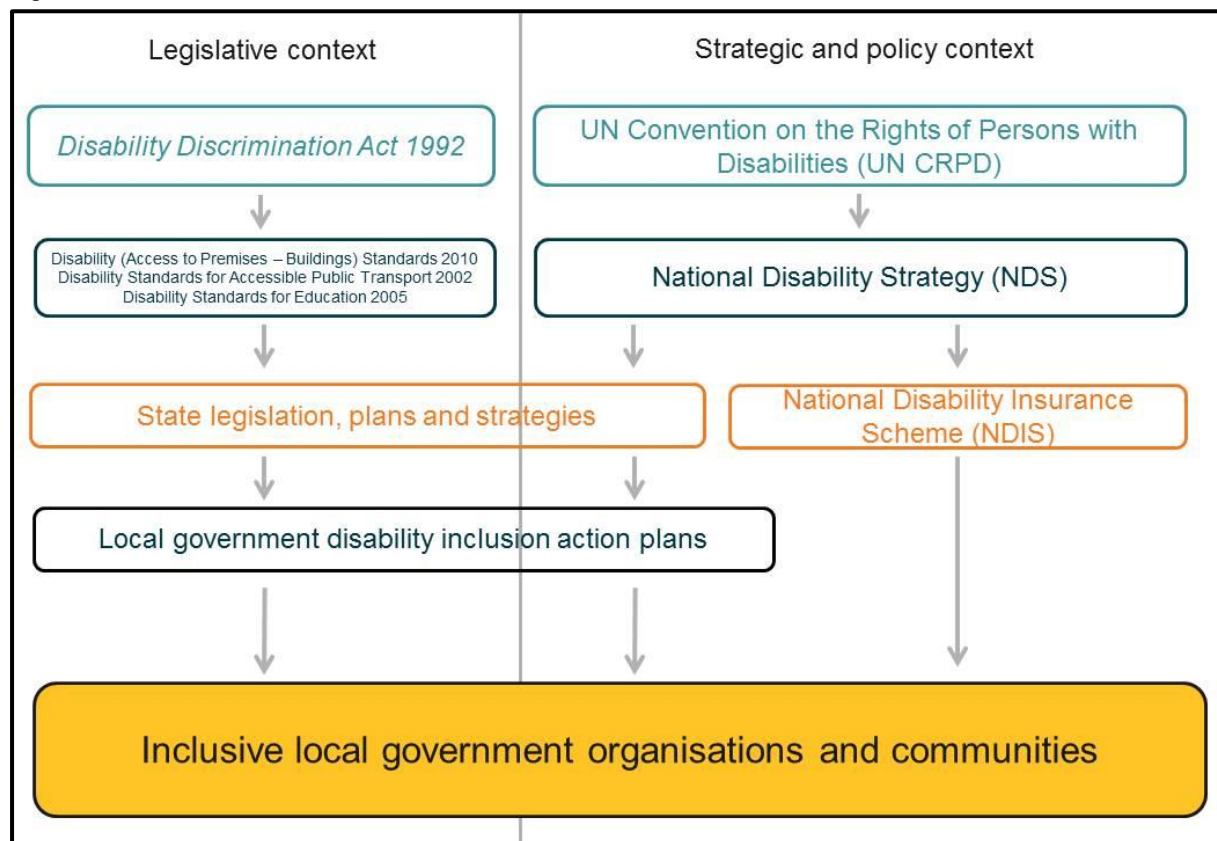
- 3. That a broad definition of communication support needs is adopted which will
 - a. include and benefit the most people experiencing barriers to communication access
 - b. identify specific subgroups of people who have communication support needs, noting those with a communication disability being of a particular focus for this work
 - c. ensure the data collected on people identified with communication support needs is consistent and comprehensive, thus strengthening advocacy to meet the needs of this diverse group

Legislative, strategic and policy context

It is important to examine Australian legislation, policies and guidelines that are relevant to communication access as this legislation sets the context for practice and research related to communication access.

Figure 1. provides an overview of the legislative, strategic and policy context relevant to communication access in Australia.

Figure 1.



(Australian Local Government Association, 2016, p. 10)

National government

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD)

Australia is a signatory to the UNCRPD, of which Article 21 is the most relevant to communication access.

Article 21 – Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information, states

“parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, including by:

- a. Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost;
- b. Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;
- c. Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities;
- d. Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities;
- e. Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages.”
(United Nations, 2006)

Disability Discrimination Act (1992)

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is an act passed by the Parliament of Australia which prohibits discrimination against people because of their disabilities. It is supplemented by a series of Disability Standards. Areas covered by these standards are employment, education, public transport services, access to premises, accommodation, and the administration of Commonwealth laws and programs (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

While communication access intersects with all of these standards, no explicit mention of communication or communication access is made with relation to the standards.

National Disability Strategy (2010 – 2020)

This National Disability Strategy is a significant move forward in achieving inclusion for people with disabilities. It has been developed in partnership under the auspices of the Council of Australian Governments and therefore has national application. It requires all state governments to be committed to a national approach to supporting people with disability to maximise their potential and participate as equal citizens in Australian society (Australian Government, 2016).

The development of this National Disability Strategy (2010-2020) is the first time in Australia’s history that all governments have committed to a unified, national approach to improving the lives of people with disability, their families and carers, and to providing leadership for a community-wide shift in attitudes (Australian Government, 2016).

The purpose of the National Disability Strategy is to:

- establish a high level policy framework to give coherence to, and guide government activity across mainstream and disability-specific areas of public policy
- drive improved performance of mainstream services in delivering outcomes for people with disability
- give visibility to disability issues and ensure they are included in the development and implementation of all public policy that impacts on people with disability
- provide national leadership toward greater inclusion of people with disability.

The Strategy will be revised and updated over its ten year life span in response to reviews of progress.

The National Disability Strategy proposes six outcome areas:

1. Inclusive and accessible communities.
2. Rights, protection, justice and legislation.
3. Economic security.
4. Personal and community support.
5. Learning and skills
6. Health and wellbeing.

Like the DDA Disability Standards, while communication access is relevant to all six outcome areas, communication is only referred to in relation to outcome 1, and this is only in relation to access to digital and telecommunication for people with disabilities generally, rather than communication access at the interpersonal level for people with communication support needs.

The National Disability Strategy identifies several challenges facing people with communication support needs.

“Those with disability are likely to experience multiple disadvantages. Lack of accessible information, communication difficulties or cultural sensitivities and differences can create barriers to services and support.” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 14)

“Some consumers benefit from a combination of signing, lip reading, text display and enhanced audio. This type of multi-modal communication is sometimes referred to as ‘Total Conversation’ ... Deaf people, people with hearing impairments and Deaf-blind people make especially good use of Total Conversation. People with communication impairments would also benefit from this multi-modal communication (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, 2010, p.36)” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 33)

“People with disability should receive the same preventative health care as others, but this does not always happen for reasons including physical barriers, lack of knowledge by health providers, stereotyping or communication difficulties.” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 61).

Despite these limited mentions of ‘communication difficulties’ and ‘communication impairment’, there is minimal specific guidance within the document to address these issues beyond improving access to information and digital and telecommunication systems.

Strong advocacy is required to improve future National Disability Strategies by specifically acknowledging and addressing the needs of Australians with communication support needs.

State and Territory governments

In addition to the Disability Discrimination Act, and commitment to the National Disability Strategy, all Australian States and Territories have equal opportunity or anti-discrimination laws, which include discrimination on the basis of disability. These laws could potentially be used in an instance of

communication access being denied, though no specific reference to communication access is made in these laws.

All State and Territory disability acts mention 'communication' when defining disability e.g. "disability, in respect of a person, means a disability - that results in - (i) a substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication," (ACT Government, 1991, p. 20). Yet none of the State or Territory acts or disability plans make any specific mention of 'communication access'. For example,

The following acts make no mention of communication with regard to communication access:

- Australian Capital Territory Disability Services Act (1991)
- New South Wales Disability Inclusion Act (2014)
- Northern Territory Disability Services Act (2017)
- Queensland Local government Act (2009)
- South Australia Disability Inclusion Act (2018)
- West Australia Disability Services Act (1993)

The Queensland and Victorian government disability acts do make some mention of communication as it would relate to communication access.

Queensland Disability Inclusion Act (2006)

This act reflects some recognition of the need to communicate appropriately with people with communication disability within the framework of disability services. An example of this is explaining the use of restrictive practices to a person with behaviours of concern. However, there is no reference to using appropriate communication in a social setting outside of this framework.

The act states:

"What are disability services

Disability services, for people with a disability, means 1 or more of the following - ...

... (e) advocacy or information services or services that

provide alternative forms of communication; ..." (Queensland Government, 2006, p. 22).

In relation to assessment of adults with an intellectual disability,

"...(b) developing theories about the factors that contribute to the adult's behaviour mentioned in paragraph (a);

Examples of factors that might contribute to the behaviour - ...

... • psychological or cognitive factors, such as low communication skills" (Queensland Government, 2006, p. 147).

With regard to requirement to give statement about use of restrictive practices

".... the relevant service provider must explain the statement to the adult in a way that has appropriate regard to the adult's age, culture, disability and communication ability" (Queensland Government, 2006, pp. 187-188).

Victorian Disability Act (2006)

This act does make a reference to social communication access in the statement below, but largely refers to communication related to behaviors of concern or disability services.

"Persons with a disability have the same right as other members of the community to - ... access information and communicate in a manner appropriate to their communication and cultural needs;" (Victorian Government, 2006, p. 14).

“Provision of advice, notification or information under this Act. 1. (1) The contents of any advice, notice or information given or provided to a person with a disability under this Act must be explained by the person giving the advice, notice or information to the maximum extent possible to the person with a disability in the language, mode of communication and terms which that person is most likely to understand. (2) An explanation given under sub-section (1) must where reasonable be given both orally and in writing. (3) If a person appears to be incapable of reading an understanding information provided under this Act, a disability service provider must use reasonable endeavours to convey the information to the person in the language, mode of communication or terms which the person is most likely to understand. (4) For the purposes of sub-section (3), the disability service provider may give a copy of the advice, notice or information—

- (a) to a family member, guardian, advocate or other person chosen by the person with a disability;
or
- (b) if no person is chosen under paragraph (a), to a person who the disability service provider considers can assist the person with a disability and is not employed by, or a representative of, the disability service provider.” (Victorian Government, 2006, pp. 19-20).

While very few and far between, these considerations required for Australians with communication support needs, recognised in legislation are a step in the right direction towards communication accessible communities, however considerably more breadth and specificity in legislation is required.

State Disability Plans

The following disability plans make no mention of communication with regard to people with communication support needs or communication access:

- NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2014
- Victorian State Disability Plan 2017 – 2020

Though limited, the remaining State governments’ disability plans include some mention of ‘communication’ with regard to communication access, focusing predominantly on access to written information or language translation.

Queensland Disability Service Plan 2017 – 2020

“Action: Government services and funded non-government services provide access to language, translating and communication services (whole-of-government, Department of Local Government Racing and Multicultural Affairs lead) and specifically “Provide advice to other government agencies about communication with people with disability.” and “Provide advice to other government agencies about requirements of the language services policy and how to access interpreter and translation services. Provide advice to Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors staff (with a priority for front-line staff) on how to access a range of interpreter and translation services. Provide advice to other government agencies about “ (Queensland Government, 2017, pp. 15-16).

Note: These actions are repeated across multiple years of the plan.

Two action items stated in the Queensland government’s disability plan are highly relevant to communication access, but do not include the word “communication”. These are:

“Action: Work towards ensuring all Queensland Government information is accessible and provided in multiple formats (whole-of –government, Department of Communities, Disability Service’s and Seniors lead).” (Queensland Government, 2017, p. 11).

and

“Action: Government policies require Queensland Government websites to meet contemporary Australian Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Work continues to be undertaken to provide transcripts and/or captions are available for newly created time-based media (i.e. pre-recorded

video/audio) (whole-of-government, Department of Housing and Public Works lead).” (Queensland Government, 2017, p. 12).

This separation of different actions for different groups highlights the multifaceted nature of communication, and challenges faced when attempting to address communication access needs of all people with communication support needs. It also highlights a lack of understanding and awareness of what communication access is within a social model of disability.

South Australian Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2014 – 2018

Under a heading of “Smart living for independence “

“Eight new “smart living” apartments were opened in 2013 to support people with disability to lead more independent lives.

The cutting-edge technology includes a call system, environmental controls and communications devices such as smart phones, which are all integrated into one system.” (Government of South Australia, 2014, p. 6).

Tasmanian Government Disability Services Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018

As well as identifying that people with disabilities may face barriers to accessing communication, the only other point relevant to communication access in the Tasmanian Government’s Disability Services Strategic Plan 2015-2018 is “Goal 3 People with disability have access to the services they need to live as independently as possible and to maximise wellbeing. Action area: Access to services ... - Information and communication activities are undertaken using accessible and fully inclusive formats” (Tasmanian Government, 2015, p. 6).

A more current document from the Tasmanian Government titled “Accessible Island: Tasmania’s Disability Framework for Action 2018” does not mention “fully inclusive formats”.

Western Australia Disability Access and Inclusion Plans

The Government of Western Australia rather than having a State Disability Plan, requires all local governments and selected government agencies to develop and implement Disability Access and Inclusion Plans. Activities and outcomes of these plans are reported annually. The 2016 – 2017 report had only two mentions of communication with regard to communication access; the first noting that people with disabilities may experience barriers to communication and the second reporting on an activity to raise awareness of communication access for people who are Deaf (Government of Western Australia, 2017).

State government services

As well as State governments having their own disability action plans, it is increasingly common that State governed services also have their own disability action plans, for example the South Australia Police Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2020, and the West Australian Country Health Service Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2015 – 2020. The documents examined only mentioned communication in relation to being affected by disability, or aiming for ‘collaboration for effective communication’, but did not outline any strategies to improve communication access.

Some State governments have developed documents or websites to provide information about communication access for people with communication support needs. For example the Victorian Government Accessible Communication Guidelines 2014, and the Queensland Government’s ‘Better communication’ website (See <https://www.qld.gov.au/disability/community/communicating>). These resources provide useful information for communicating with people with a variety of different communication support needs, but are for the most part not evidence based.

Key legislation and planning documents, as well as examples of government services and resources across Australia, for the most part do little to address communication access. While most documents

address the fact that disability can result in communication limitations, very few goals or strategies are documented to address these.

Local government

Western Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales State governments as part of their disability action plans (required by the federal government as part of the National Disability Strategy) require all local governments to also develop disability action plans. These have different names in different States e.g. Disability Access and Inclusion Plan in Western Australia, and Disability Action Plan in Victoria.

The Disability Inclusion Planning - Guide for Local Governments (2016) highlights two practical examples of activities undertaken by local governments as part of their disability action planning, which have relevance to communication access.

1. Examples of social inclusion for people with an intellectual disability:

“Providing training to staff working with children who have developmental delays and disabilities that affect communication and behaviour. Ku-ring-gai Council in NSW provides Inclusion Support Training to empower staff with the knowledge and confidence to engage and appropriately communicate with children with conditions such as Autism, ADHD, anxiety disorders and developmental delays. Goals of the training, which is provided and funded by Lifestart, include increasing awareness of the challenges faced by children with disabilities, educating staff on effective communication strategies that enable inclusion and providing guidance on best practice tools and techniques. The Council provides training for Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden staff who provide tours and workshops for various groups, landscape architects, local aquatic and fitness centre staff and staff who run a range of community events and programs.” (Australian Local Government Association, 2016, p. 5)

2. “The City (of Melville in WA) established Melville’s Age-Friendly Accessible Businesses Network (MAFAB) for businesses within the shopping centre..... The City collaborated with AMP Capital Shopping Centres (Garden City) to produce a booklet for 280 retailers which included tips on how they can implement more inclusive practices, within the physical environment such as: colour contrast, clear signage and wide aisles and customer service and communication.” (Australian Local Government Association, 2016, p. 49)

See Appendix B for links to resources listed in the Disability Inclusion Planning – Guide for Local Governments on communication and inclusive consultation.

Communication access standards and guidelines in Australia

This review yielded two standards and two guidelines currently used in Australia, though it is likely there are others. It is important to note that there is no requirement to comply with these, as without legislation, services voluntarily opt to meet these standards and guidelines.

1. Communication Access Standards, Scope Australia (See Appendix C and <https://www.scopeaust.org.au/service/communication-access/>)
2. Victorian Government Accessible Communication Guidelines 2014 (See Appendix D)
3. Auslan – English translation and video production standards, Australian Consumer Communication Action Network, (See <https://accan.org.au/grants/completed-grants/621-what-standards-the-need-for-evidence-based-auslan-translation-standards-and-production-guidelines>)
4. Australia.gov.au is currently compliant to Level A of the Web content accessibility guidelines version 2.0 (WCAG 2.0) standard. (See <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>)

International perspective

In the search for evidence to support communication standards for the Australian context it is valuable to examine what legislation and policies are guiding practice and research in communication access internationally.

Key legislation, policies and guidelines relevant to communication access from countries where these have been developed are outlined here.

United Kingdom

The Equality Act 2010 protects and promotes the rights of people with disabilities in the United Kingdom.

The Royal College of Speech Language Therapists has in recent years developed a position paper on Inclusive Communication, and five good communication standards (see Appendix E). In December, 2018, after extensive consultation, the Royal College of Speech-Language Therapists launched a communication access symbol and checklist to determine whether a service or organisation is communication accessible (see Appendix F and Money et al., 2016; Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2018)

Scotland

Underpinned by the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Equality Act 2010, the Scottish Government in 2011, developed a resource titled: Principles of Inclusive Communication: An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities (See Appendix G). This document provides six principles of inclusive communication with good practice examples for each, and ten performance indicators.

There are two new pieces of legislation in Scotland that include specific reference to inclusive communication. In March 2018 the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016 came into force. This act includes guidance on the provision of communication equipment and support in using that equipment and states:

“Scottish Ministers must, to such extent as they consider necessary to meet all reasonable requirements, provide or secure the provision of

- a. communication equipment, and
- b. support in using that equipment, to any person who has lost their voice or has difficulty speaking.”

(Scottish Government, 2016, p. 23)

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 is legislation that will provide Social Security benefits to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Included in this act are the following clauses:

“4. Recognition of importance of inclusive communication

- (1) In fulfilling their duty under section 3(a), the Scottish Ministers must have regard to the importance of communicating in an inclusive way.
- (2) In subsection (1), “communicating in an inclusive way” means communicating in a way that ensures individuals who have difficulty communicating (in relation to speech, language or otherwise) can receive information and express themselves in ways that best meet each individual’s needs.

5. Recognition of importance of accessible information

- (1) In fulfilling their duty under section 3(a), the Scottish Ministers must have regard to the importance of providing information in a way that is accessible for individuals who have a sensory, physical or mental disability.
- (2) The steps taken by the Scottish Ministers under section 3(b) must include steps in relation to ensuring that—
 - (a) the information this Act requires the Scottish Ministers to give to an individual is given in a format that is accessible to the individual, and

- (b) all information which this Act requires the Scottish Ministers to make publicly available is available in formats that are accessible to individuals who have a sensory, physical or mental disability.”
(Scottish Government, 2018)

While this new legislation is a positive step in the right direction towards communication access for people with communication support needs, they focus on the person with the communication support needs and not on the environment and the responsibility of services, organisations and communities to take action to support communication access.

Canada

Not every province in Canada has accessibility standards. At the time of writing, Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia have accessibility standards (Deafblind Ontario Services, 2018).

The existing standards with regard to communication access focus on the need to provide information in ‘accessible formats’ or provide ‘communication supports’.

Communication Canada’s Successful Communication Toolkit: Literacy and You (2003), provides an overview of straightforward communications practices in a variety of formats, and identifies some of the common barriers to good communication. (See <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/PF4-16-2003E.pdf>)

Canada is in the process of developing Federal Accessibility Legislation. On November 27, 2018, Bill C-81, the proposed Accessible Canada Act, passed third reading in the House of Commons, and at the time of writing had moved on to the Senate.

United States

The Americans with Disability Act (1990) has rules and guidelines regarding ‘effective communication’. For example:

“People who have vision, hearing, or speech disabilities (“communication disabilities”) use different ways to communicate. For example, people who are blind may give and receive information audibly rather than in writing and people who are deaf may give and receive information through writing or sign language rather than through speech.

The ADA requires that title II entities (State and local governments) and title III entities (businesses and nonprofit organizations that serve the public) communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities. The goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities. ...

The purpose of the effective communication rules is to ensure that the person with a vision, hearing, or speech disability can communicate with, receive information from, and convey information to, the covered entity.”

Covered entities must provide auxiliary aids and services when needed to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.

The key to communicating effectively is to consider the nature, length, complexity, and context of the communication and the person’s normal method(s) of communication.

The rules apply to communicating with the person who is receiving the covered entity’s goods or services as well as with that person’s parent, spouse, or companion in appropriate circumstances.” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014)

New Zealand

In December 2018, the New Zealand Government approved a work programme to thoroughly explore how full accessibility can be achieved for disabled people and all New Zealanders. This work

programme will focus on accessibility for disabled people but will also look at how accessibility can be improved for other groups such as seniors, carers of young children, people with English as a second language, and those with temporary injuries (New Zealand Government, 2018)

With regard to communication access, the New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists' Association have focused on raising awareness through a process of Communication Access Awards (10 were awarded in 2018) and through awareness campaigns such as Giving Voice Aotearoa. Organisations or individuals who have provided a positive experience for those who have communication disabilities or needs, can be nominated by consumers and Speech Language Therapists for Communication Access Awards.

The New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists Association has also consulted with consumers by conducting focus groups and interviews for the Capturing Voices project, and have developed a Communication Access Checklist for members to assess their workplaces (New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists Association, 2018).

India

India has relatively recently ratified the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016. This act makes numerous mentions of 'communication' with regard to communication access and explicitly notes specific means of communication for face to face, written and online communication, and is inclusive of a broad range of communication support needs.

For example, the act states:

"In this act ...

(c) "barrier" means any factor including communicational, cultural, economic, ... which hampers the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society; ...

(f) 'communication' includes means and formats of communication, languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, signs, large print, accessible multimedia, written, audio, video, visual displays, sign language, plain-language, human-reader, augmentative and alternative modes and accessible information and communication technology: ...

(n) 'information and communication technology; includes all services and innovations relating to information and communication, including telecom services, web-based services, electronic and print services, digital and virtual services; ... "

(Government of India, 2016)

Of all the legislation examined in this review, India's Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) makes the most comprehensive and explicit inclusion of people of the diverse group of people with communication support needs.

From the review of legislation nationally and internationally it is apparent that legislation in Australia is lacking with regard to upholding the human rights of people with communication support needs relative to other countries such as the United States, Scotland and India.

KEY ISSUES

4. Lack of terms or standards used in Australian legislation or policy to specifically address communication access of Australians with communication support needs
5. Considerable variability between States and sectors with regard to recognition of need for awareness raising and guidelines relating to communication access for people with communication support needs

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. That advocacy is undertaken to include specific practices to address the communication access needs of Australian's with communication support needs in the next National Disability Strategy and State disability plans
5. That examples of legislation, policies and practices which promote the rights and address the communication access needs of people with communication support needs nationally and internationally, are highlighted, recognised and shared with governments, government agencies, peak bodies and service providers to raise awareness of good practice.

Evidence Based Practice and Communication Access

Before examining evidence of approaches which facilitate communication access, it is important to highlight some key challenges faced when reviewing literature in this area. Four issues in particular are evident:

1. The topics of communication disorders in general and AAC in particular are not well represented, so specialised databases housing evidence-based practice are of limited value to AAC practitioners and researchers (Schlosser, 2005). To further highlight the currency of this point for the current project, 4 databases were searched yielding 16 relevant articles from 11 different sources.
2. The complexity of the multifactorial impairments often with associated cognitive, sensory and environmental factors have an impact on study design and generalisability of the findings (Enderby et al., 2013)
3. "While inclusive communication practice is increasing, the impact of communication access practices have not been the focus of formal primary research to date." (Money et al., 2016, p. 37)
4. Communication Access is a relatively new field of research, so it is challenging to find established communication accessible environments to evaluate. Communication access requires social change which takes time.

Despite these challenges, the below outlines evidence to support communication access standards and practices. It is acknowledged this review is far from exhaustive due to the abovementioned challenges in sourcing data and the limited time frame for this project.

Communication with people with communication support needs

The key themes identified from reviewing the literature sourced through data base searches and relevant documents shared by the reference group (see Appendix A.) are 1. the need for a two-pronged approach by service providers; 2. the value of communication partner training; 3. the need to consider people with communication support needs broadly; and 4. the need for specific research and evaluation regarding communication access.

1. The need for a two-pronged approach by service providers

The evidence of benefit for individuals with communication support needs resulting from a broad range of underlying conditions, by providing AAC is strong (Enderby et al., 2013; Howerly, 2015). However speech pathology service models for people with communication support needs, that focus on capacity building to develop welcoming and inclusive communities, are rarely reported in the literature (Johnson, Solarsh, Bloomberg, & West, 2016).

Most of the evidence of the impact of strategies to improve communication access comes from project evaluation, or is anecdotal. The Royal College of Speech Language Therapists member survey revealed that 15% of respondents had developed local inclusive communication standards, and more than half had audited their standards to measure how successfully standards have been implemented, highlighted areas of good practice and helped share information. One third reported positive findings and one third reported anecdotal/informal positive evidence (Money et al., 2016).

Similarly, "V/Line, a major transport company that became communication accessible in 2016, has reported its highest ever satisfaction rating by the Public Transport Victoria customer service monitor. V/Line has attributed this positive result as a direct outcome of becoming communication accessible" (Solarsh & Johnson, 2017a, p. 61). While anecdotal evidence like this is positive, more rigorous and systematic evaluations are required to better understand the processes and mechanisms which lead to change, whether the outcomes are sustained, and most importantly whether the service users experience has changed for the better.

Despite the strong evidence for individualised therapy, Johnson et al. (2016) highlight that a focus on only providing individualised services for people with communication support needs, risks their further isolation and lack of community inclusion and experience of citizenship.

A two-pronged approach is therefore necessary, to both develop the communication competencies of the individual with communication support needs, and simultaneously build capacities of the communities in which they interact. It is contended however that rigorous and methodical evaluation of both is required.

Hewitt and Pound (2013) note five barriers to communication access; environmental, structural, attitudinal, informational and temporal, while Duchan (2006) identifies barriers related to knowledge and skill, use of communication devices, and discourse related to communication access. Similarly, O'Halloran, Grohn, and Worrall (2012) identified two major barriers to communication access; communication partners, and service structures and processes, through undertaking a meta-synthesis of communication environments for all types of communication disability in hospitals.

In developing a set of questions to assess communication accessibility, the Victorian Communication Access Network were cognisant of the need to address multiple communication barriers. "The Communication Access Assessment Checklist now consists of 26 questions in five categories of questions including (a) 10 questions about staff interpersonal communication, (b) four questions about the display and information about products and services, (c) four questions about the communication environment, (d) six questions about signage and wayfinding, and (e) two questions about the communication outcome" (Solarsh & Johnson, 2017a, p. 60)

In developing the capacities of the communities in which people with communication support needs interact, the multiple potential barriers to communication access identified above need consideration.

2. Value of communication partner training

Numerous studies report the efficacy of communication partner training in improving the communication experience of people with communication support needs (Balandin & Duchan, 2007; Cruice, Blom Johansson, Isaksen, & Horton, 2018; Howery, 2015; Johnson et al., 2016; Parr, 2007; Simmons-Mackie, Raymer, Armstrong, Holland, & Cherney, 2010; Simmons-Mackie, Raymer, & Cherney, 2016; Togher & Power, 2010). While communication partner training tends to focus more on training familiar communication partners, both familiar and unfamiliar partners demonstrate improvements after communication partner training. (Simmons-Mackie et al., 2010).

In a special edition of the *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, Balandin and Duchan (2007) note that four of the seven articles focus on communication partner training. However, many different methods and approaches to communication partner training are reported, and often lack detail, thus limiting replicability (Cruice et al., 2018).

3. Need to consider people with communication support needs broadly.

Smyser-Fauble (2015) argues the benefits of intersectional methodologies (combining lenses of inquiry), to further the pursuits of social justice, and create a stronger focus on deconstructing social barriers of exclusion through emphasising the value of embodied experiential knowledges and patient narratives. For example, not observing individuals through the lens of what has caused their barrier to communication access e.g. deafness, cerebral palsy, low literacy) but rather recognising that their stories and experiences and responses have common themes.

Lending weight to this argument, increasingly authors are noting similarities between the experiences of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those whose communication support needs result from disabilities (Booth, Armstrong, Taylor, & Hersh, 2018; Solarsh & Johnson, 2017a). Booth et al. (2018) suggest that because of these findings, a broader group of people could potentially benefit significantly from policy development that acknowledges the centrality of communication access for social inclusion and well-being. Similarly, Bunning and Horton (2007, p. 19) argue for the need for service providers working with people with aphasia and those working with people with learning disabilities to "pool energies and to galvanise resources for the common good."

As discussed previously in the section on population, there is general agreement that there is value in including all people who experience barriers to communication access, and not just those with disabilities (Law et al., 2007; Money et al., 2016; Smyser-Fauble, 2015; Solarsh & Johnson, 2017a).

Finally, it is important to note that people with sensory impairments will invariably experience barriers to communication access, though the specific needs of these groups is not always considered when addressing communication access. It is important to always consider people with sensory impairments (Deafness, hearing impairment, blindness, low vision and deafblindness) when addressing communication access, as while these groups experience barriers to communication access, there is more likelihood that people with intellectual disabilities and older people will have sensory impairments, compounding their communication support needs.

4. Need for further research and evaluation

There is little question that considerably more research and evaluation are required to identify effective strategies and practices to improve communication access, and evaluate outcomes of applying these.

In particular, the following gaps in the literature are identified:

- Public awareness and understanding of communication disability and public attitudes towards people with communication support needs (Booth et al., 2018; Law et al., 2007)
- The costs of communication support needs to the individual and to society as a whole
- The relative value and outcomes of an enhanced “communication accessible” model of service delivery across sectors (Law et al., 2007; Money et al., 2016)

Propose need for further research in 3 areas:

1. Expectations of service users with communication support needs
2. Public attitudes to and understanding of people with communication support needs
3. Developing and evaluating a communication friendly environment across local services

Money et al. (2016) identify methods speech pathologists in the UK can employ to contribute to the evidence base indicating the efficacy of strategies to support communication access (see Appendix I).

While documents like the Principles of Inclusive Communication An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities (Scottish Government, 2011), and Speech Pathology 2030 (Speech Pathology Australia, 2016) propose ‘communication access for all’, it is important to acknowledge that best communication access for some people will always be mediated by human support. In particular, Australians who are Deaf or deafblind and require Auslan interpreters for best communication access, or those with limited or no symbolic communication who communicate idiosyncratically and require skilled human communication support, should be provided with these supports wherever possible. These human supports are not well addressed in the literature regarding communication access, and are not always noted in communication standards and checklists, but it should not be assumed that they will necessarily be provided or available.

Written communication

While numerous guidelines exist for creating accessible written information, and some studies which look at aspects of accessible written information, there is very limited evidence regarding how effective these guidelines are in increasing access to print information (Anderson et al., 2017; Basterfield, 2017)

As with ‘communication access’, there are numerous terms used to refer to accessible written information. These terms include: Information for all, Information friendly, Accessible information, Easy read, Easy English, Aphasia friendly, Medical literacy, Legal literacy, and Plain language (Basterfield, 2017), and the similarities and differences between these is not always clear.

Guidelines for accessible written information focus on:

- Page layout
- Text alignment and hyphenation
- Font and the use of contrast and coloured text
- Highlighting important points
- Paper
- Number of letters and words
- Images
- Format
- Words per page
- Language
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Numbers
- Nature size and placement of images
(Anderson et al., 2017; Basterfield, 2014, 2017)

Anderson et al. (2017) highlight the importance of considering individual differences and needs stating that:

“making information accessible involves more than following a set of recommendations from a guideline. It also means delivering that information in a way that suits the needs and preferences of the person with ID, and maximises the person’s choice and control over the information. ... Communication is highly individualised, so it follows that tailoring information to reflect the needs and preferences of the intended audience, and delivering it in a way that best suits the individual with ID, offers the greatest chance of providing information that is accessible and which will promote an inclusive society.” (Anderson et al., 2017, p. 11)

It is common to read in government documents that ‘print material should be provided in alternative formats’. This typically refers to accessible formats for those who are blind and vision impaired, e.g. braille, large print, audio or electronic. When developing or evaluating standards or guidelines for accessible written information the needs of those with low literacy and reduced language competence as well as the needs of those with low vision should be considered and included.

Online communication

Online communications have become ubiquitous and are critical to social inclusion and participation for all. While there is still relatively little information regarding communication access in relation to online communication, preliminary studies support the inclusion of Internet-based communications when considering the communication access of persons with communication support needs (Bay, 2017; Caron & Light, 2015; Hynan, 2013; Hynan, Murray, & Goldbart, 2014; Moisey, 2007).

Not only is equal access to online critical, but research suggests that people with complex communication needs can benefit from Internet-based communications such as social networking sites to support communication and improve upon social participation (Caron & Light, 2015)

Accessibility standards for online communication has tended to focus on the needs of people with vision impairments. See the World Wide Web Consortium <https://www.w3.org/standards/>, though standards are being developed for people with cognitive impairments to access online content.

KEY ISSUES

6. Need for increase in practices, research and evaluation regarding communication access, including face to face, written, and digital mediums.
7. Need for consistency and clarification of meaning of terms, including population of people with communication needs in research

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Advocate for evaluation of practices supporting communication access to be prioritized on the research agenda in Australia

Existing communication access standards

While several communication standards and guidelines exist there is some variation between them with regard to process of development, target audience, and government support.

See Table 4, for a summary of key features of some of the standards and guidelines currently in use.

Table 4. Comparison of existing communication standards and guidelines

Communication standard or guideline	Developed in collaboration with people with communication support needs	Includes face to face, written, telephone, and online	Supported by evidence, or legislation	Inclusive of broad range of communication support needs	Broad target audience
Communication access for all 2015 (Scope, Australia)	Yes.	Only partially addresses online communication.	Yes, References UNCPRD (2006), Disability Discrimination Act, National Disability Strategy, Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Victorian Disability Act.	Yes.	Yes
Victorian Government Accessible Communication Guidelines 2014	Not specified	Yes.	Yes. References The Disability Act 2006 (Vic) The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) »The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwth)	Yes	Yes
Five good communication standards (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2013)	Yes.	Unclear. Potentially, but appears to focus on face to face communication. Telephone and online communication not specified.	No.	No, Designed for people with a learning disability and / or autism.	No. Designed specifically for health and social care providers.
Principles of Inclusive Communication An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities (Scottish Government, 2011)	YES	Yes	Yes. References Equality Act (2010) and UNCRPD (2006)	Yes	Yes

Royal College of Speech Language Therapists Annex 2 (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2018) (See Appendix G)	Yes	Unclear. Potentially, but appears to focus on face to face communication. Telephone and online communication not specified.	Not specified	Yes	Yes
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Note: Of the five standards and guidelines reviewed, the Victorian Government Accessible Communication Guidelines 2014 are the most broadly inclusive with specific acknowledgement of and strategies for different types of communication support needs.

KEY ISSUES

8. Considerable variability in the communication access standards and guidelines which are currently available

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Communication standards should:

- a. Involve a broad range of people with communication support needs in their development
- b. Be supported by government, ideally by legislation
- c. Support communication access for a broad range of people in a broad range of contexts including face to face, written, telephone and online.
- d. Be evidence based.

Conclusion

In recent years there have been increasing efforts to raise awareness, and develop programs, resources, standards and guidelines to improve communication access for people with communication support needs nationally and internationally. These efforts have effected changes in legislation in some countries to better uphold the human rights of people with communication support needs, though legislation in this area in Australia remains limited with 'access' tending to focus on physical access, or general access to information and communication technologies.

Despite numerous activities to promote communication access, there remains lack of clarity and consistency regarding terminology and the population of people included when considering people with communication support needs. There is also inconsistency in the existing communication access standards and guidelines.

Considerably more research and evaluation are required to determine which strategies and approaches result in the best and most sustainable outcomes for the broadest most inclusive group of people with communication access needs. Strategies and approaches need to be clearly described and documented in detail for replicability.

This Literature Review does not claim to be an exhaustive review of all possible literature and evidence and was conducted as part of a time-limited project.

Within those boundaries, this report provides a platform for future work in defining the scope, context and application of communication access standards to support full and effective participation within society of those with communication support needs.

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Appendices

Appendix A. References and sources

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Solarsh and Johnson (2017) Developing Communication Access Standards to Maximize Community Inclusion for People With Communication Support Needs.	EBSCOhost / Academic Search Alumni Edition	Topics in language disorders
Hynan, A., Murray, J., & Goldbart, J. (2014). 'Happy and excited': Perceptions or using digital technology and social media by young people who use augmentative and alternative communication.	EBSCOhost / Communication and Mass Media Complete	Child Language Teaching and Therapy
Bunning and Horton 2007 "Border crossing" as a route to inclusion: A shared cause with people with a learning disability?	EBSCOhost / Communication and Mass Media Complete	Aphasiology
Parr, 2007 Living with severe aphasia: Tracking social exclusion.	EBSCOhost / Communication and Mass Media Complete	Aphasiology
Hynan 2013 How I use the internet and online socialmedia : experiences of young people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)	EBSCOhost / Open Dissertations	Thesis
Hynan, A., Murray, J., & Goldbart, J. (2014). 'Happy and excited': Perceptions or using digital technology and social media by young people who use augmentative and alternative communication., 30(2), 175-186. doi:10.1177/0265659013519258	EBSCOhost/ Communication and Mass Media Complete	Child Language Teaching & Therapy
Booth et al2018 Communication access: is there some common ground between the experiences of people with aphasia and speakers of English as an additional language?	Scopus	Aphasiology
Smycer Fauble 2015 Applying a feminist disability methodological framework in technical communication by interrogating access & deconstructing social barriers of exclusion	ProQuest	Thesis
Bay 2017 Communicating Through Social Media: How Persons with ALS Use the Internet to Maintain Social Connections	ProQuest	Thesis
Johnson and Solarsh 2016 Supporting people with complex communication needs through community capacity building: the Communication Access Network	ProQuest	Tizard Learning Disability Review
Togher and Power 2010 Communication Training Programs for Public Agencies and Everyday Communication Partners: An Overview	ProQuest	Asia Pacific Journal of Speech Language and Hearing
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Moisey, S. D. (2007). The Inclusive Libraries Initiative: Enhancing the access of persons with developmental disabilities to information and communication technology.	Google Scholar	The Developmental Disabilities Bulletin,
Duchan, J., F. (2006). Communication access: Models and methods for promoting social inclusion, 26(3), 185–188.	Google Scholar	Topics in Language Disorders
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Appendix B. Checklists, guides and training on ‘communication’ and ‘inclusive consultation’ from Disability Inclusion Planning: A guide for local government (2016)

Communication

[http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/Global/Publications/Understanding%20disability/words that work media guide.pdf](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/Global/Publications/Understanding%20disability/words%20that%20work%20media%20guide.pdf)

<http://www.aarts.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Checklist-MarketingandCommunications.docx>

<http://www.aarts.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Checklist-Venue3SignageandCommunciations.docx>

<http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/research-policy/guides/disabilitycare-service-providers-accessibility-guide>

(Australian Local Government Association, 2016, p. 55) p.55

Inclusive consultations

Snap, send, solve app <http://www.snapsendsolve.com/>

Inclusive Consultation Guide https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/ic.pdf

<http://www.urbis.com.au/accessible-consultations>

Making consultation processes accessible <http://www.qld.gov.au/web/community-engagement/guides-factsheets/people-disabilities/accessible-consultation-processes.html> (Qld)

Inclusive consultation and communication with people with a disability http://www.daru.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Inclusive-Consultation-and-Communication-with-People-with-a-Disability_04.pdf (VIC)

Consultation and people with a disability

http://www.disabilitycouncil.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/258416/Consultation_and_pwd.pdf (NSW)

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum

https://www.iap2.org.au/Tenant/C0000004/00000001/files/IAP2_Public_Participation_Spectrum.pdf

(Australian Local Government Association, 2016, p. 58) p.58

Australian Local Government Association (2016). Disability Inclusion Planning: A Guide for Local Government.

Appendix C. Criteria for Communication Access Standards, Scope

To display the Communication Access Symbol you will need to be assessed and meet the minimum standards for communication access.

Communication access standards include the following criteria:

Skilled staff

- Staff treat the person with dignity and respect
- Staff take time, do not rush the conversation
- Staff talk directly to the person.
- Staff are willing to use different methods of communication.

For example:

- point to objects and pictures
- use gestures
- ask yes and no questions.

An environment that supports communication

- Service desks and items are positioned so customers who use wheelchairs are able to move around easily and point to items.
- Quiet spaces are available where you can have a conversation.
- There is a well-lit place to have a conversation.

Signs that are clear

- Signs are easy to see. For example, at eye level.
- Signs are easy to read and also have pictures or symbols on them.

Written information that is accessible

- Information is available in different formats. For example, plain language or

Easy English, Braille, large font or audio versions.

- Staff read and explain written material to people who ask for assistance; for example menus, documents, health information.

(Scope Australia, 2015, p. 20)



VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT
ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION
GUIDELINES 2014

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Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format.
For example, large print or audio.

Telephone (03) 9651 5111 or email advertising@dpc.vic.gov.au.

You can also get a PDF format on our website www.dpc.vic.gov.au.

WHAT IS 'ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION'

Accessible communication ensures everyone has the same access and opportunity to attend events, read publications, use websites, respond in emergency situations, and find out about policies and programs.

It is especially important for government communicators to build accessibility into all communication activities to make sure they reach the whole community.

Accessible communication is making sure that your messages are delivered in the most appropriate way, and reach the widest possible audience. To do this well, you need to be aware of the diverse range of needs in the community and know where to go for further assistance.

'Communication' refers to messages, events and activities used to engage and inform the community about Victorian Government programs, policies and services.

These guidelines will assist us in providing communication materials in formats that ensure the information will reach all Victorians.

APPLICATION

These guidelines apply to all Victorian Government entities, as well as any organisations that procure media services through the Master Agency Media Services (MAMS) contracts.

YOUR AUDIENCE

When these guidelines talk about people with a disability, it means a person who has an impairment that affects their physical, mental, intellectual or sensory functions. This may mean they encounter barriers to accessing information.

One in five Victorians has a disability; that's 20 per cent of the population.

All communication strategies need to include people with disabilities and mental illness.

You may also consider the communication needs of people:

- › recovering from accidents or illness
- › with chronic health issues
- › requiring some adjustments in the workplace
- › who are ageing
- › with English as a second language or who have low literacy.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Government communicators are responsible for ensuring communication is provided in a format suitable for people who encounter barriers when accessing government information.

In Victoria, legal obligations to promote and uphold the rights of people with a disability are outlined in the following legislation:

- › The *Disability Act 2006* (Vic)
- › The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- › The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- › The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwth)

Under the *Disability Act 2006* all government agencies are required to develop and implement a disability action plan.

Victoria's *Equal Opportunity Act 2012* includes a 'positive duty obligation' which means agencies need to take proactive and reasonable steps to address causes of discrimination, regardless of whether a complaint has been made or not.

The Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2004* helps value and protect human rights within both government and the community. Human rights must be considered when creating legislation, implementing policies or delivering services.

Under the Commonwealth's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, agencies must ensure that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights to access information and services as others in the community.

Victoria's *State Disability Plan 2013-16* outlines the Victorian Government's approach to reducing the barriers faced by people with a disability when accessing education, employment and other services.

In 2008, the Australian Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which specifically recognises (under Articles 9 and 21) access to information, communications and services, including the internet, is a human right.

Accessibility requirements for websites are mandated under government policy, legislation, and through whole-of-government commitments. The Australian Government has endorsed the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.0 for all government websites.

Departments must update all government websites to WCAG 2.0 conformance:

- › Level A should have been reached by 31 December 2012)
- › Level AA by 31 December 2014.
- › Level AAA (Triple A) is recommended where possible as this meets the highest accessibility standards.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION

PLANNING YOUR COMMUNICATION

You should always consider accessibility when planning your communication. Your communication should be easy to understand and available in alternative formats so it reaches the widest possible audience, including those with a disability.

COMMONLY USED ACCESSIBLE FORMATS INCLUDE:

- › Large print – typically a minimum 16-point font size is used, but this can be customised to suit individual requests.
- › Audio – audio, CD or podcast. This format is most useful if the information can be read from beginning to end without needing to refer to other parts of the document.
- › Braille – a tactile writing system used by people who are blind. When preparing information to be brailled, keep the document layout as simple as possible for easier transcription.
- › Easy English – is a simplified form of plain English that is used for written information. Easy English is helpful for people with a cognitive or intellectual disability or low English language literacy levels.
- › Videos with captions, Auslan interpreting and/or audio description.

For targeted communication, you should determine the particular needs of your audience and the most effective method to reach them.

The fact sheet on planning your communication provides more information on planning and preparing your communication, including publications, Word documents and PDF documents.

CLEAR AND APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

The language we use is important, for both audience reach and ensuring people with a disability are included and represented in a positive way. The key considerations are:

- › always put the person first, not the disability
- › can you use plain English (everyday words and short, concise sentences) or

Easy English (conveying information using pictures and short sentences) to help convey your message. **Scope** has a guide to using Easy English:

The fact sheet on clear and appropriate language provides more information.

PUBLICATIONS, WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Identify the essential messages or information your audience needs to know and ensure this information is in an accessible format.

Key external policy statements or documents should be produced in accessible formats, and you might consider a Braille copy or an Auslan translation. Other documents should be available in accessible formats upon request.

It is required by law that all government websites must be accessible. Some essentials to consider include:

- › appropriate font size and style
- › high-contrast colour difference
- › visitors to your website should be able to navigate it using only a keyboard or accessibility aid
- › ensure all non-text content has a text equivalent (like ALT text for images).

The fact sheet on websites and social media accessibility provides more information.

EVENTS AND VENUES

You must consider accessibility when hosting events that are open to the public, such as stakeholder briefings or community forums. Your event venue must be fully-accessible and close to public transport. Some essentials to consider when planning an event include:

- › accessibility tags (see below for more information) on invitations
- › accessible venues for all your events
- › detailed instructions on how to reach the function room (not just the venue)
- › alternatives for communicating with your audience, such as live captioning, captions on videos, provision of Auslan interpreters and visual or auditory alternatives to announcements.
- › The checklist on events and venues has a list of things to consider when planning your event.

ACCESSIBILITY TAGS

An accessibility tag provides standard and consistent wording to inform those with a disability that accessible formats, support and aids are available upon request.

Tags should be placed on all publications, event invitations and websites.

Avoid naming an individual as a contact point. Instead try to use URLs, email addresses and phone numbers that will remain current for the life of the document.

If you need advice on booking access supports such as Auslan interpreters and attendant care, follow the link to the fact sheet on using interpreters and other communication resources.

This is an example of an accessibility tag for publications which can be cut and pasted into your own document or publication:

Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format, please telephone (insert standard departmental telephone) or email (insert departmental email address).

This document can also be found in formats on our website (www.department.vic.gov.au).

This is an example of accessibility tag for events which may be cut and pasted into your event invitation:

We can help you with access at this event. For example, a car park, Auslan interpreters and attendant carers.

To make sure we can help you, contact us by (insert response date). Telephone (insert standard departmental telephone) or email (insert departmental email address).

The fact sheet on accessibility tags has more information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- › Victorian Government Communication Guidelines 2013
- › Accessible Communication User Fact Sheets and checklists 2013
- › The Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-16
- › The Department of Human Services Office for Disability
- › National Relay Service.

This fact sheet has more information on specific organisations and resources.

GLOSSARY

ACCESSIBLE FORMAT

Accessible format is the term used to describe alternative communication formats for people who have difficulties accessing information. Sometimes the term 'alternative formats' is used.

ACCESSIBILITY TAGS

An accessibility tag provides standard and consistent wording to inform those with a disability that accessible formats, support and aids are available upon request.

ATTENDANT CARER

A person employed to assist people with disabilities with daily tasks, for example at mealtimes and for personal care.

AUSLAN

Australian Sign Language (Auslan) is the sign language of the Australian Deaf community.

AUSLAN TRANSLATION

English is not the first language of the Deaf, Auslan is. Auslan translation assists in making information more accessible for people who are deaf. Videos can be produced in a variety of formats.

View an example of web content that has been translated into Auslan.

BRAILLE

Braille is a system of tactile writing used by people who are blind or visually impaired. When preparing information to be brailled, keep the document layout as simple as possible as this aids transcription.

CAPTIONS

Captioning is the text version of speech and other sound that can be provided on video, DVDs, the internet, and at cinemas and theatres.

Captioning is usually displayed on the bottom of a screen or on a separate screen and in some cases is positioned to show which character is speaking or where the sound is coming from. Colouring may also be used to distinguish between sounds or voices.

View an example of video content with captions.

DEAFBLIND

Deafblindness, sometimes called dual sensory impairment, is the combination of both hearing and vision impairment. There are many forms of deafblindness.

People who are deafblind may communicate using tactile interpreters, or use other communication supports such as note takers.

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

A disability action plan is a document that organisations prepare and use in order to reduce and remove the barriers experienced by people with a disability. Government departments are required by law to have a disability action plan. For more information on Victoria's state disability plan, go to:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/disability-action-plans

EASY ENGLISH

Easy English is a simplified form of plain English that is used for written information, often using pictures and short sentences. It is helpful for people with a cognitive or an intellectual disability or low English language literacy levels.

Clear and simple words and short sentences are used. Pictures and photographs are also often used to illustrate sentences. Developing Easy English documents is a specialised skill and it is advisable to contact an expert to produce documents. For an example of Easy English go to:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/plans-and-strategies/disability-services/victorian-state-disability-plan-2013-2016

Follow this link to Scope's Easy English Style Guide for more guidance:

www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/site/resources/easyenglishstyleguide

HEARING INDUCTION LOOP

Hearing induction loops enable sound, such as speech, to be transmitted to a listener by means of a magnetic field. Many large conference venues have 'loops' installed in rooms. Alternatively portable 'loops' can be hired for events.

LIVE CAPTIONING

Live captioning of speeches, conferences, school lessons or other events is also known as CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation). It is often performed remotely with the captioner connected via phone or the internet.

MICROSOFT OFFICE READABILITY TOOL

Use the readability test to assess the Fleisch Reading Ease and the grade level of your document.

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-au/word-help/test-your-document-s-readability-HP010148506.aspx>

NATIONAL RELAY SERVICE

The National Relay Service is an Australia-wide phone service for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. It can also support people with speech that is hard to understand.

relayservice.gov.au/

PLAIN ENGLISH

Plain English (or plain language) is a term which describes writing that is clear and simple. It avoids jargon, bureaucratic terms and acronyms. It is characterised by everyday words and simple language.

For more information on Plain English: go to:

www.plainenglishfoundation.com/

POSITIVE DUTY

The Equal Opportunity Act 2012 (Vic) introduces a positive duty requiring all organisations covered by the law (including government business, employers and service providers) to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation.

For more information about positive duty, go to:

www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/employer-responsibilities/positive-duty

TACTILE INTERPRETER

Tactile interpreting is a common means of communication used by people who are deafblind. It is based on Auslan and requires two interpreters.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript is an alternative text version of audio material. For an example of a transcript go to:

www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-01/who-pays-for-the-ndis-shortfall/4662132

TTY

A telephone typewriter (TTY) is a telecommunication device that enables people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired to use a telephone. For more information on TTY, go to:

relayservice.gov.au/faqs/tty-faqs/

FACT SHEET: PLANNING YOUR COMMUNICATION

The following is a guide on things to consider when planning your communication, and preparing word documents and PDF files.

The basics are outlined below and there are some useful links to references providing step-by-step guides, if you need them.

Things to consider when preparing publications, such as guidelines and policy statements include:

- › Include an accessibility tag where appropriate.
- › Use a minimum type size of 12 font.
- › Use plain fonts, such as Arial. These are often described as 'sans serif' (without small curls or decorative features).
- › Avoid using blocks of text written in capital letters – information is easier to read for people with a vision impairment or limited literacy if it is written using a mix of upper and lower case.
- › Use lots of white space and a simple layout.
- › Use bold text for emphasis rather than underlining or italics.
- › Justify margins on the left hand side and leave the right hand margin unjustified.
- › Use contrasting colours to increase readability – for example, black text on a white background is preferable.
- › Do not place text over pictures, photos or other images, as this makes the text hard to read.
- › When providing a link to a PDF document, also provide an alternative accessible format such as Word or HTML. Or make the PDF accessible (LINK).

- › Limit the use of tables and try to use bullet points where possible, for better visibility and for people with low literacy. Where tables are used, design the content so that it is suitable for screen reading software – for example, by repeating the name of the column in each cell.

HOW TO PRODUCE ACCESSIBLE WORD DOCUMENTS

Make sure that your Word document is also compliant with your departmental style templates. You can speak with your Communication Branch if you are unfamiliar with your department's style templates.

The following link has a step-by-step guide to creating your accessible Word document (including the best way to use tables and images) if you need more information.

office.microsoft.com/en-au/word-help/creating-accessible-word-documents-HA101999993.aspx

HOW TO PRODUCE ACCESSIBLE PDF DOCUMENTS

Make sure that you have the appropriate software – either Adobe Acrobat Professional X or Adobe Reader X- installed to successfully convert your MS Word file to PDF.

The following link has a step-by-step guide to producing and preparing these documents:

office.microsoft.com/en-au/word-help/create-accessible-pdfs-HA102478227.aspx

FACT SHEET: CLEAR AND APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

The language you use in your communication should be positive and inclusive when referring to people with a disability.

DO USE...	INSTEAD OF...
Person with a disability For example: Person with autism Person with epilepsy	Disabled/the disabled/victim of/suffers from/handicapped/ special/stricken with/unfortunate Autistic person Epileptic person
Person with a physical disability For example: Person with cerebral palsy	Physically challenged
Person with a sensory disability For example: Person with a vision/hearing impairment Person who is deaf or hard of hearing Person who is blind	The deaf The blind, blind people
Person with an intellectual disability For example: Person with Down syndrome	Mentally disabled/intellectually challenged Downs' kids
Person with a mental illness For example: Person with schizophrenia or a person with bipolar disorder	Insane/mentally challenged Schizophrenic person
Accessible toilet/accessible parking space/accessible entry	Disabled toilet/disabled parking space
Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined to a wheelchair/wheelchair bound
Person with little or no speech	Dumb
Person who is comatose/unconscious/in a coma	Vegetable/vegetative
Person without a disability	Normal/non-disabled

PLAIN ENGLISH CHECKLIST

Plain English refers to written communication that is easy to understand, free of jargon and well structured.

Follow this link to the Plain English foundation for more information:

www.plainenglishfoundation.com/free-writing-tools

Plain English should not be confused with Easy English. Easy English refers to written communications that use further simplified language and layout, in combination with images or symbols.

Follow this link to Scope's Easy English Style Guide for more guidance

www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/site/resources/easyenglishstyleguide

The following checklist has been prepared as a guide to writing in Plain English:

IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION	YES	NO
Have you considered your audience and who your message is aimed at?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the things you want to communicate to your audience easy to identify?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the structure of your document present the information in a logical order?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your sentences concise? Does each sentence contain just one idea?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your language clear and considered? (Does your document avoid jargon and acronyms?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your paragraphs concise and focused on a single idea?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your wording clear or can your sentences be interpreted in a number of ways? (Tip: use the Microsoft Word readability statistics tool)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

FACT SHEET: WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHECKLISTS

PRODUCING WEBSITES

The following checklist has been prepared as a guide to designing and updating web pages:

This checklist is not exhaustive and you should work with your web team to ensure web accessibility requirements are met.

IN WEB PAGES

	YES	NO
Text is in simple, everyday language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images have alternative (alt) text (unless they are purely for decoration)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images are not used for text, unless the image is part of a logo or brand name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audio and video can be paused or stopped by users	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transcripts are available for video and audio files	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is strong colour contrast between text and background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colour is not used as a prompt or to convey information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text can be increased and decreased in size by the user	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Links describe where the link is going, not the URL address (rather than 'click here' links)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Links to documents contain the document type and file size	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All documents are available in an accessible version (Word doc content and PDF)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All parts of the website can be accessed using only the keyboard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is more than one way to find information (search/sitemap/navigation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Labels are presented next to fields that require the user to enter information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There are no time limits imposed on users	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pages do not contain quick flashing (i.e. more than three flashes a second)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you need to use tables, you have checked with your web team about how to make these accessible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You have tested your website using screen reader software with your web/online team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you need an Auslan version on the website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SOCIAL MEDIA

Increasingly, social media is being used in government communication. As a general rule, usual web accessibility principles apply. This means you must:

- › provide transcripts for videos (for example on YouTube)
- › link to accessible web content
- › keep the language simple
- › caption video and consider live captioning
- › describe the content of photographs
- › give alternative text descriptions of the key data in maps, charts or graphs.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript is an alternative text version of audio material. For an example of a transcript go to:

www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-01/who-pays-for-the-ndis-shortfall/4662132

Victorian Government Accessibility Toolkit (version 3.1.1) can provide you with more detail on how to make your digital content accessible:

www.egov.vic.gov.au/victorian-government-resources/manuals-and-toolkits-victoria/accessibility-toolkit/accessibility-toolkit-version-3-2009.html

CHECKLIST: EVENTS AND VENUES

This checklist can help you quickly and easily assess whether or not your venue, event, content and format, are accessible and appropriate for people with a range of different needs.

PLANNING YOUR EVENT

Have you included an offer to provide accessibility aids and/or support (accessibility tag) on the invitation?

YES

NO

Do you have a RSVP system for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, including TTY, National Relay Service or text messaging facilities?

Have you checked that staff at the venue are aware of disability access issues and will help you to ensure equal access for people with a disability?

Have you advertised your event in accessible formats?

Have presentation and other materials been made available before hand?

AT THE VENUE

YES

NO

Is the venue close to public transport?

Are there accessible parking bays and pick-up/drop-off areas?

Is the entry free from steps or is there an alternative, such as a ramp?

Have you been to the venue and checked the suitability of the alternative entrance?

Is there a hand-rail on any steps?

Are the edges of steps marked clearly?

Are doorways wide enough for people who use a wheelchair?

Is there adequate space for people who use a wheelchair?

Are tables and tea and coffee facilities accessible for people who use a wheelchair?

Are accessible toilets conveniently located to your event?

Appendix D. Victorian Government Accessible Communication Guidelines 2014

YOUR EVENT	YES	NO		YES	NO
Have you instructed your host to briefly outline the venue features and facilities such as directions to bathrooms, exits and refreshments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there any other features which address accessibility (e.g. Braille and tactile ground floor indicators etc)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you made copies of your presentation/ materials to be handed out at the event?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If you are using a PowerPoint presentation, is it clear and easy to read?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you made name tags with the font size as large as possible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In your PowerPoint presentation, is the font sans serif no smaller than 24 point in size?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is seating available at the front of the venue for people who have vision or hearing impairment, so they can lip read or see the Auslan interpreter clearly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If you are screening a video, does it have captions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the room have an inbuilt FM transmitter system or hearing loop?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
If your venue has televisions, do they have teletext facilities? Have you considered live captioning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Have you located where the Auslan interpreter will be positioned?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Is there easy access to the stage (a ramp with handrails, does the ramp have the correct gradient?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

FACT SHEET: ACCESSIBILITY TAGS

ACCESSIBILITY TAGS

A 'tag' provides standard and consistent wording to inform the people with a disability that accessible formats, support and aids are available upon request.

- › Tags should be placed on all publications, event invitations and websites (if not already fully accessible)
- › Avoid naming an individual as a contact point, except for specific events. Instead, try to use websites, email addresses and phone numbers that will remain current for a reasonable period
- › The exact text and format of the tag may be tailored to suit your communication however the tag must be clear and easy to read.

SAMPLE ACCESSIBILITY TAG WHICH MAY BE CUT AND PASTED INTO YOUR FOR PUBLICATION:

Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format. For example, large print or audio. Phone (insert standard departmental telephone) or email (insert departmental email address).

You can also get formats on our website (www.department.vic.gov.au).

SAMPLE ACCESSIBILITY TAG FOR EVENT INVITATIONS:

We can help you with access at this event. For example, a car park, Auslan interpreters and attendant carers.

To make sure we can help you, contact us by (insert response date). Phone (insert standard departmental telephone) or email (insert departmental email address).

FACT SHEET: FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION

GENERAL TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

- › If a person with a disability is accompanied by another person, such as an attendant carer or interpreter, address your questions directly to the person with a disability.
- › Put the person first, not their disability. For example, use the term “a person with a disability” rather than “a disabled person”.
- › Try to avoid negative phrases such as “suffers from” and “crippled”. Use the phrase “people who use a wheelchair” rather than “wheelchair bound”.

COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

- › Remember that a person’s personal space can include their wheelchair and crutches. Do not touch or push a person’s wheelchair or move their crutches or walking stick without their permission.
- › When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair, try to find something to sit on in order to be at eye level with them.

COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH A VISION IMPAIRMENT

- › When you meet a person who has a vision impairment, always address them by name and introduce yourself by name.
- › Speak clearly, in a normal voice and volume.
- › When offering seating, provide verbal cues.
- › Remember that people with a vision impairment cannot rely on the same visual cues as people who do not have a vision impairment. Make sure you verbalise any thoughts or feelings.

- › When you enter or leave a room, say something that indicates your presence or that you are leaving. This ensures that the person who has a vision impairment will not be embarrassed by speaking to an empty space.
- › If a person is accompanied by a guide dog, do not pat it, feed it or otherwise distract it while it is in a harness. A dog in a harness is working. The same applies to assistance dogs.
- › If you are guiding the person, walk on the person’s opposite side to the guide dog.
- › According to government legislation, you must allow the guide (or assistance) dog to go anywhere the person using it can go.

COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH A HEARING IMPAIRMENT

- › Gain the person’s attention before speaking. Try a gentle tap on the shoulder, a wave or some other visual signal to gain attention.
- › Face the person directly and maintain eye contact.
- › Make sure your mouth is visible. Remember not to cover your mouth with your hand or any other object as you talk.
- › Look directly at the person while speaking and speak evenly, not too fast or slow.
- › Don’t exaggerate your mouth movements, as this will make it more difficult to lip read.
- › Use short sentences.
- › Keep your volume up and natural. Don’t shout.

COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH A SPEECH IMPAIRMENT

- › Give your whole attention when talking to a person with speech impairment.
- › Ask short questions that require short answers.
- › Do not pretend to understand if you do not. Rephrase the question or ask the person to repeat what you do not understand.
- › Use your normal tone of voice.
- › Do not try to complete the sentence or answer. Give the person the time they need to communicate their response.
- › Communicating with people with an intellectual disability
- › Before talking, ensure you have the person's attention. Try using their name or eye contact to make sure you have their attention.
- › Keep your questions simple and your answers easy to understand.
- › Remember that your body language is important, as people with an intellectual disability often rely on visual cues.
- › Be prepared to use, or to receive visual information from people with an intellectual disability.
- › Be specific and direct. Avoid talking using abstracts, acronyms, metaphors or puns.

FACT SHEET: ORGANISATIONS AND RESOURCES

Here are some contact details for organisations that can provide services and information to assist you to provide accessible communications.

ATTENDANT CARE

There are many attendant care agencies that can be easily found on the internet. You should compare a few quotes as prices can vary.

HEARING LOOPS

Better Hearing Australia can provide more information on hearing augmentation systems to support people with a hearing impairment to access meetings and events. It also provides hearing impairment awareness training. www.betterhearing.org.au.

Vicdeaf and the Australia DeafBlind Council can provide you with information about Teletypewriters (TTY) and hearing augmentation systems.

INTERPRETERS AND NOTETAKERS

If using interpreters refer also to the Victorian Government's guidelines on using interpreter services:

www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/projects-and-initiatives/improving-language-services/standards-and-guidelines

The following organisations can provide notetakers, Auslan and tactile interpreters and Auslan translation:

- › Sign Language Communications (not for profit) www.slcommunications.com.au/
- › AuslanServices www.auslanservices.com/booking.html
- › Echo Interpreting www.echointerpreting.com.au/.

LIVE CAPTIONING

Australian access companies that provide live captioning

The following Australian companies provide live captioning services:

- › Red Bee Media
- › Ai-Media
- › Captioning and Subtitling International (CSI)
- › Caption It
- › The Captioning Studio.

SCOPE COMMUNICATION RESOURCE CENTRE

The Scope Communication Resource Centre has an accessible information unit that specialises in Easy English, plain language and other accessible written information. The unit is also experienced in training, consultancy, peer support and partnering with organisations and businesses to provide written information in accessible formats.

www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/site/whatweoffer/communicationresourcecentre

TELEPHONE RELAY SERVICES

National Relay Service is an Australia-wide telephone access service that relays calls. People with speech and hearing impairment can contact anyone through the National Relay Service. They can use a Teletypewriter (TTY) or a computer with internet access. relayservice.gov.au/

WEB ACCESSIBILITY

Commonly used screen reading software includes:

- › JAWS
- › Windows Eyes
- › NVDA.

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

ABLE AUSTRALIA

Supports people with multiple disabilities, including deafblindness.

TELEPHONE: 1300 225 369

<http://www.ableaustralia.org.au/>

AMAZE/AUTISM VICTORIA

supports individuals, families and carers affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders.

TELEPHONE: 1300 308 699 OR 9657 1600

www.amaze.org.au

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER VICTORIA (ADDVIC)

Supports children, adolescents and adults with ADHD and co-existing disorders.

TELEPHONE: 9820 2144 (METRO) OR 1800 233 842 (RURAL)

home.vicnet.net.au/~addvic/

AUSTRALIA DEAFBLIND COUNCIL

Provides support and advocacy services for people with deafblindness.

TELEPHONE: 9882 8596

www.deafblind.org.au/

BLIND CITIZENS AUSTRALIA

Can provide advice and assistance in preparing material for people with a vision impairment.

TELEPHONE: 1800 033 660

www.bca.org.au/

BRAINLINK

Provides resources and services to improve the quality of life for people affected by an acquired brain disorder.

TELEPHONE: 1800 677 579 OR 9845 2950

www.brainlink.org.au

CEREBRAL PALSY SUPPORT NETWORK

Provides support, advice and assistance for parents of children with cerebral palsy.

TELEPHONE: 1300 277 600

www.cpsn.info

COMMUNICATION RIGHTS AUSTRALIA

Can provide support and information for people with communication or speech difficulties.

TELEPHONE: 9555 8552

www.caus.com.au

CYSTIC FIBROSIS VICTORIA

Assists and supports individuals and carers of people with cystic fibrosis.

TELEPHONE: 9686 1811

www.cfv.org.au

DOWN SYNDROME VICTORIA

Provides information, support and advocacy services for people with Down Syndrome.

TELEPHONE: 1300 658 873 OR 9486 9600

www.downsyndromevictoria.org.au

EPILEPSY FOUNDATION OF VICTORIA

Supports people living with epilepsy, and their families, with support, resources and advocacy services.

TELEPHONE: 1300 852 853 OR 9805 9111

www.epinet.org.au

INDEPENDENCE AUSTRALIA

Supports people with a disability or other physical need.

TELEPHONE: 1300 704 456

www.independenceaustralia.com

VICDEAF

Can provide more information on resources and assistance for deaf and hard of hearing people.

TELEPHONE: 9473 1111

www.vicdeaf.com.au

VISION AUSTRALIA

Provides services and resources to people with a vision impairment

TELEPHONE: 1300 84 74 66

www.visionaustralia.org

Appendix D. Victorian Government Accessible Communication Guidelines 2014



Appendix E. The five good communication standards

Standard 1: There is a detailed description of how best to communicate with individuals.

Standard 2: Services demonstrate how they support individuals with communication needs to be involved with decisions about their care and their services.

Standard 3: Staff value and use competently the best approaches to communication with each individual they support.

Standard 4: Services create opportunities, relationships and environments that make individuals want to communicate.

Standard 5: Individuals are supported to understand and express their needs in relation to their health and wellbeing.

(Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2013, p. 5)

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. (2013). Five good communication standards. In. London: RCSLT.



The Communication Access Symbol Project

Progress update – 4th December 2018

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists has been engaged in a project in partnership with a number of charitable and service user organisations from across the UK, to develop a symbol for communication access in the UK and standards to underpin its use. This would be akin to pre-existing disability access symbols such as the wheelchair access symbol and visual and hearing impairment symbols.

Since the initiation of the project in mid-2016, two consultation phases have been held to determine a concept for the design of the symbol, engaging over 64 different service user organisations across the UK:

- The first consultation phase tested six pre-existing designs as concepts.
- The second phase sought to refine a specific concept based on the outputs from the first phase.
- Over 5,500 responses were received for both phases, with 26% of the second phase responses from service users self-identifying as with a communication difficulty.
- Responses were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, determining the concept for the development of the symbol and a design specification. A designer supporting the project on a pro-bono basis to develop a symbol design (see annex 1).
- We also sought views to determine the standards that would underpin the use of the symbol, and were able to define six operational standards.
- An RCSLT group of inclusive communication experts have now used these to determine a framework defining additional organisational standards in line with the operational standards, mapped to pre-existing inclusive communication standards (see annex 2).
- A training package has been developed based on the standards for individuals and organisations seeking to adopt the symbol and become communication accessible.

We will now be moving forward with an early adopters phase to test the applicability and resilience of the symbol, standards and training package through a monitoring framework.

Organisations from across the UK will be participating in this phase and will include NHS trusts, local authorities, higher education institutes, businesses and charities. This will be for a period of 5 months, the data from which will be used to inform potential changes to each element prior to efforts to mainstream the symbol.

Annex 1



Appendix F. Annex 2. from the Communication Access Project update

Annex 2

Standards (applicable at organisational and individual levels)	Actions: How to meet standards at an organisational and individual level	Operational Indicators: How do I know I am getting it right
Recognise every group includes people with communication support needs	Put in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public commitment to Inclusive communication • Basic inclusive communication good practice guidelines for all modes of communication • Module on inclusive communication in all core staff training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of Communication Access symbol • Rolling programme of staff training • Offer a range of options for people to contact and interact with you • Staff know and apply TALK prompt <p style="text-align: center;">TIME/ASK/LISTEN/KEEP TRYING</p>
Find out what support is required by the people you are set up to serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use available data on communication preferences of your potential users, and where appropriate collect further data • Ask people if they have communication support needs and what helps them understand and communicate with the organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms in place for individuals to share their communication preferences • Where appropriate communication preferences are recorded, highlighted and shared with others
Take action in all communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt physical environment • Match the way you communicate to the ways people understand. • Respond positively to the different ways people express themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider communication access from the beginning of all activities from designing physical environments to service delivery • Rolling programme of staff training including knowledge, skills and attitudes • Share inclusive communication resources within the organisation • Verbal/written information available in accessible formats 	Individuals are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcomed • Given time to communicate, process information and ask questions • Listened to • Given verbal and written information accessible to them <p style="text-align: center;">Feedback on Communication Accessibility from service users and staff</p>
Keep Trying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor performance against standards at organisational and individual level • Take action to improve where required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual self-monitoring framework in place • Regular public statement on meeting standards, and actions to be taken to improve

Principles of Inclusive Communication

An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities



Principles of Inclusive Communication

An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities



Appendix G. Principles of Inclusive Communication: An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities

If you would like this document in another format please contact the Scottish Government Equality Unit at:

equality.unit@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Or contact the Equality Policy and Communities Team at:

Equality and Communities
Local Government and Third Sector Directorate
Scottish Government
Area 2G - South
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Telephone: 0131 244 2730

Textphone Users: use prefix 18001

Fax: 0131 244 1824

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This document is also available from our website at **www.scotland.gov.uk**.

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Appendix G. Principles of Inclusive Communication: An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities

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.¹ 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.

¹ 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>



Appendix G. Principles of Inclusive Communication: An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities

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.



Appendix G. Principles of Inclusive Communication: An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities

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.



Appendix G. Principles of Inclusive Communication: An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities

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



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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.



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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

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

View in Easy Read at: www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/publications/uncrpd_guide_easyread.Pdf

Appendix G. Principles of Inclusive Communication: An information and self-assessment tool for public authorities

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.



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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

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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



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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.

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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.



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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

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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.



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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.



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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

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

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>



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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

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>

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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.



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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.

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- NHS Fife
- People First Scotland
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)
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- Service providers who tested this document
- Volunteers with diverse communication support needs who tested this document



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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.

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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.

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Local Government and Third Sector Directorate
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This document is also available on the Scottish Government website:
www.scotland.gov.uk

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Appendix H. Potential subgroups of people with communication support needs. Law et al. (2007)

People with:

- Aphasia following a stroke
- Autistic spectrum disorder (Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD))
- Asperger's syndrome and other disorders of social communication
- Alzheimer's disease
- Cerebral palsy
- Cleft lip and palate
- (Deafblindness / dual sensory impairment)
- Deafness
- Developmental language delays and disorder
- Dyslexia
- Dementia
- Friedreich's ataxia
- Head injury
- Hearing impairment
- Huntingdon's chorea
- Learning disability
- Laryngectomy
- Motor Neurone Disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Muscular dystrophy
- Neurological disease (including progressive neurological disorders)
- Specific language impairment
- Stammering (Dysfluency)
- Visual impairment (Blindness, low vision and vision impairment)
- Voice disorders

Appendix I. Methods speech pathologists in the UK can employ to contribute to the evidence base indicating the efficacy of strategies to support communication access. Money et al. (2016)

These include:

- “Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) - aim to assess the quality of care delivered. This method focuses on evaluating the disabling effects of Speech Language and Communication Need (SLCN) as reported by the individual. PROMs involve asking individuals about their quality of life before and after inclusive communication interventions.
- Patient/service user feedback - this method uses patient feedback to improve services and includes initiatives such as the Friends and Family Test (FFT) and 360° feedback. The FFT evaluates whether individuals would recommend local speech and language therapy services to their friends and family, whereas 360° feedback explores what individuals think about their SLT.
- Patient-led assessments of the care environment (PLACE) is a system for assessing the quality of patient environments. Traditional NHS PLACE assessments could be adapted to focus on how communication-friendly health and care environments are to individuals with Speech Language and Communication Needs.
- Communication partner confidence questionnaires can be used to collect quantitative data from communication partners pre and post interventions. This data can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of specific inclusive communication interventions, for example, training, peer support and clinical supervision. Questionnaires should be designed to cover specific topics covered in the inclusive communication interventions, for example, confidence in screening an individual’s symbolic development, producing a symbol-based, easy-read resource, using gesture and signing.
- Training evaluation - evaluation forms and questionnaires should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the training to ensure that the training is economically effective and provides the desired outcomes. The evaluation should explore how the trainees reacted to the training, what they learned, how they changed their behaviour and their perceptions of the impact on both their own and user’s communication experience.
- Competency framework - competencies refer to the knowledge, skills and behaviours that communication partners must have (or acquire) and demonstrate to support inclusive communication effectively. Competency frameworks can be used pre- and post-intervention (such as a rolling training programme) to measure the nature, quality and spread of inclusive communication competences in any given staff team or organisation.
- Clinical audit is a way to find out if local services are being provided in line with standards and lets others know where their service is doing well, and where there could be improvements. Services should audit themselves against national drivers such as the Scottish Government’s “Talk for Scotland” Communication Principles and/or Principles of Inclusive Communication or RCSLT Five Good Communication Standards. In England, services will be required to measure performance against NHS England Accessible Information Standards.
- Observation checklists - an observation checklist is a list of things that an observer is going to look at when observing an environment. The checklists not only give an observer a framework for an observation but can also serve as a feedback form and contract of understanding with the communication partners. Repeated use of the same checklist pre intervention and at regular intervals post intervention could provide a useful source of data and learning tool for both the SLT and the services they are working for (e.g. Aphasia Institute Communicative Access Measures for Stroke – series of surveys

<https://www.aphasia.ca/home-page/health-care-professionals/resources-and-tools/cams>).

- Patient stories - allow for a more detailed evaluation of an individual's experience of inclusive communication interventions. Interviews are used to collect descriptive information. There are two main rationales for using patient stories. First, they can be used to celebrate good practice and highlight positive experiences of inclusive communication interventions. Second, they can be used to highlight difficulties or barriers with inclusive communication interventions, so that lessons can be learnt (see Inclusive Communication webpage for case studies).
- User led "Secret Shopper" evaluations - an NHS Education Scotland Project, 'Through a Different Door', supported people with communication support needs (with support from Talking Mats, Ltd.) to rate communication access to various NHS Scotland services. The approach used for this user evaluation of inclusive communication practice is available here.
- Economic impact assessment - this method of evaluation considers the efficiency of inclusive communication interventions and whether they represent value for money. Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is a method for comparing the costs and effects of an intervention in monetary terms. CBA is based on three elements: the effects of the intervention, the costs associated and the benefits of the intervention (i.e., health and social care cost savings and quality of life gains). Prevention and local population health needs, as reported in local joint strategic needs assessments, can also be considered with economic evaluations."
(Money et al., 2016, pp. 39-40)