

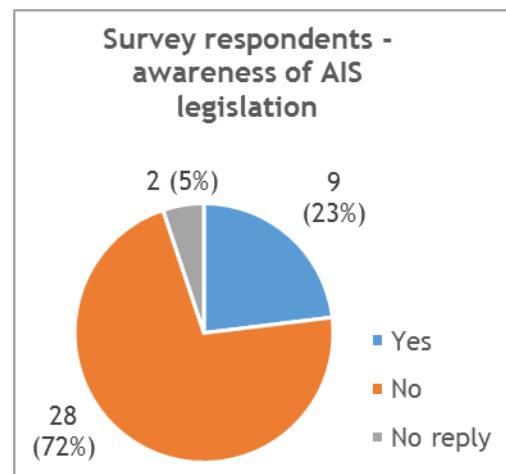
## 1) ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION STANDARD (AIS)

Through this work Healthwatch aimed to understand the impact that the AIS legislation had had on people's experiences of using health and social care services since its introduction in August 2016.

During 2017 and early 2018, Healthwatch carried out a series of engagement visits to local groups and services to gather people's feedback, in addition to a running an online survey. Through this work, Healthwatch spoke to 70 people and received a further 39 survey responses.

### Findings:

- It soon became clear that there is a lack of public awareness of the AIS. 28 survey respondents (72%) reported not having heard of the legislation, this was reflected through our conversations with local groups too.
- 20 of the 28 respondents (71%) reported using primary care services in the first instance, which highlights the importance of these services in raising awareness of the AIS with the public.
- Almost half of the 28 respondents that had not heard of the AIS had a disability or sensory loss that would be recognised and supported through the legislation.
- 25 survey respondents (65%) felt that services provide information in a way that is accessible to them, however they often reported needing to be proactive in asking for it which conflicts with the first step of AIS. Step one: 'Ask' - does the patient have a communication need, and if so, how can it be met?



In general Healthwatch found that health and social care staff have a good knowledge of the need to support people with communications needs, however they are not always aware of the AIS legislation, or its requirements on how they work and operate. This is particularly important for organisations to note as the Care Quality Commission is beginning to include compliance with the AIS in its inspections.

Through our engagement we identified many areas of good practice, where organisations are working hard to comply with the AIS legislation, including the Ophthalmology and Audiology departments at the Royal United Hospital (RUH) and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP).

### Here are some examples of what AWP is doing:

- recording and flagging clients' communication needs (AWP)

- acquiring software to facilitate client and carer interaction with the AWP website and resources
- identifying interpretation providers for spoken language, translation and British Sign Language (AWP)
- offering Deaf awareness training and piloting a scheme to enable Deaf clients to access crisis services by email or text (AWP)
- developing an AWP Trust-wide policy to enable Deaf people or people with social anxiety conditions, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders (which preclude telephone communication),
- developing signage for Deaf people to enable access to buildings which are usually accessed by intercom
- set up an AIS steering group to oversee compliance with the legislation across the Trust.

### **During two visits to the RUH, Healthwatch observed:**

- positive work being done to improve accessibility for patients within the Audiology and Ophthalmology departments, including:
  - signage in large print and colours appropriate for patients with additional accessibility needs
  - posters prompting patients to share their communication needs with staff
  - provision of a range of information about community-based support services.

Following our engagement, we held a workshop for local health and social care providers to find out what Healthwatch had learnt, share best practice and learn from one another's experiences of implementing the AIS. The event, which was held on 15 June 2018 at Somerdale Pavilion, was attended by 40 members of staff from a wide range of statutory organisations and voluntary and community sector groups across Bristol, B&NES and South Gloucestershire.

We invited the RUH and AWP to present to the group and share what they have done to comply with the legislation. Their insight was well received and attendees reported finding it useful to hear what had worked well, the challenges that these organisations had faced and how they had worked (or are still working) to overcome them. We then broke the group into small table discussions to share their own practice, 'quick wins' and ideas that they have longer-term to ensure compliance within their own organisations.

Feedback from the event was really positive. Notes from the workshop have been shared with attendees and other partners, including NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.

Healthwatch is now going to work with colleagues at The Care Forum to set up an online provider forum for organisations across the West of England to continue sharing resources, information and experiences around the AIS. Since sharing the notes from the workshop with providers, we have been approached by two organisations in the South and South West who want to talk to us about this work and ask if they can get involved. To read more W: <https://bit.ly/2HPmaPr>

*"I found the session really helpful, with lots of ideas to take away..."*

*(AIS event participant)*

## 2)HEALTHWATCH B&NES ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

The 2017 - 18 annual report has been published and is now available to view on our website

W: <https://bit.ly/2IFNpfJ>

## 3)‘WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?’ PUBLIC EVENT

On 4 July 2018, Healthwatch B&NES held an open meeting at Saltford Village Hall for members of the public and staff/ volunteers from community or voluntary groups to come and share their experiences of using local health and social care services, or those of the people that they work with or support.

The meeting was promoted via local newsletters, press, radio and online groups, e.g. community Facebook and Twitter pages. This is the first time that we have held a session like this - the meeting was attended by 15 people, including members of the public, Healthwatch volunteers and representatives from local VCSE organisations.

Topics or concerns raised by attendees, included:

- Non-emergency patient transport services
- Prescribing policy reviews, implementation and consistency of prescribing across the district
- Direct payments and support around managed accounts
- Individual Funding Requests (IFRs)
- Home care services and the current review

Where possible, Healthwatch will seek answers to the questions that were raised from statutory partners, e.g. B&NES Council and BaNES Clinical Commissioning Group, and provide feedback to the people that attended. Healthwatch’s Executive Board will also consider this feedback and identify if there is any further engagement work that can be carried out during the year to understand people’s experiences around these issues, and also which strategic groups this information needs to be shared with.

Healthwatch will hold another public event in the autumn in another part of the district. This approach is part of our new model of trying to engage with local people and understand what is important for them.

## GET IN TOUCH

To talk to us in more detail about anything contained in this report, or to find out more about Healthwatch B&NES:

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