Guidance on the

The Accessible Information Standard

Meeting the Accessible Information and Communication Support Needs of Service Users with Disability (including learning disability), Communication Impairment or Sensory Loss

Hannah Watson
Specialist Speech & Language Therapist/
Accessible Information Manager

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1 Background to the Accessible Information Standard

1.1 "The Equality Act became law in October 2010. It replaced, and aimed to improve and strengthen, previous equalities legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Equality Act (the Act) covers all of the groups that were protected by previous equality legislation, known as Protected Characteristics, one of which is disability. The Act places a legal duty on all service providers to take steps or make "reasonable adjustments" in order to avoid putting a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage when compared to a person who is not disabled." NHS England.

1.2 The Accessible Information Standard was published by NHS England in July 2015. This was published as a response to their recognition that, despite the existence of legislation requiring health and social care organisations to provide reasonably adjusted care, many service users continue to receive information in formats that they cannot access and/or understand, or do not receive the support they need to communicate.

1.3 There is much research to support the existence of disadvantages in access to care for people with accessible information and/or communication support needs including people with learning disabilities and sensory impairments. The final report of the Confidential Inquiry into premature deaths of people with learning disabilities (CIPOLD, 2013) reported that "The lack of reasonable adjustments to facilitate healthcare of people with learning disabilities, particularly attendance at clinic appointments and investigations, was a contributory factor in a number of deaths. GP referrals commonly did not mention learning disabilities, and hospital flagging systems to identify people with learning disabilities who needed reasonable adjustments were limited." Access all Areas? found that 28% of people with hearing loss had left their GP unclear about a diagnosis, 19% had been unclear about their medication and 14% of people with hearing loss had missed an appointment due to not hearing their name being called in the waiting room (Action on Hearing Loss, 2013). Research entitled Sick of it (SignHealth, 2014) found that British Sign Language (BSL) users had worse health outcomes and estimated that missed diagnosis and poor treatment for this group was costing the NHS £30 million per year.

1.4 Good, accessible service user information is important as it can:

➢ Help to ensure that patients arrive on time and are properly prepared
➢ Remind patients of what they have already been told (in case they have forgotten)
➢ Reinforce information provided during face to face contact
➢ Explain important instructions regarding self-administration of care and treatment
➢ Involve patients and carers in their treatment and condition
➢ Help patients to make decisions by giving them facts about risks, side effects and benefits
➢ Give patients confidence, improving their overall experience
➢ Tell people what other information, support and resources are available

2   What is the Accessible Information Standard?

2.1   The Accessible Information Standard applies to all providers of NHS and publicly funded adult social care. It ensures that all service users and carers are provided with information that they can access and understand, and are supported to communicate effectively. The scope of the Standard includes any service user or carer who requires accessible information and/or communication support due to disability (including learning disability), communication impairment or sensory loss.

2.2   There are 5 stages to the Standard that all organisations providing NHS or adult social care must achieve:

1. **Ask** - staff must routinely ask all service users and carers accessing Trust services if they have any accessible information and/or communication support needs.

2. **Record** - All service users and carers must have their accessible information and/or communication support needs recorded in a highly visible way. If the service user and/or carer has no accessible information or communication support needs, this must also be recorded.

3. **Alert** - Staff must be alerted when a service user or carer accessing their service has accessible information and/or communication support needs.

4. **Share** - staff must routinely share information about a service user or carer's accessible information and/or communication support needs with other organisations and agencies involved with the service user.

5. **Act** - All staff must be equipped to meet the accessible information and/or communication support needs of their service users and carers.

3   Accessible Information and communication support needs

3.1   What is an 'accessible information need'?

According to the Accessible Information Standard, 'accessible information' is defined as 'information which is able to be read or received and understood by the individual or group for which it intended'. We think of someone as having an 'accessible information need' if they are not able to read, receive or understand information in the standard format and, instead, need it to be converted into an alternative format to allow them to read or received and understand. People with sensory impairments, learning disabilities, cognitive deficits and/or communication impairments may demonstrate accessible information needs.

3.2   What is a 'communication support need'?

The Accessible Information Standard defines 'communication support' as the 'support which is needed to enable effective, accurate dialogue between a professional and a service user to take place'. We consider someone to have a communication support need if the professional needs to adapt the way they communicate their message in order to help the person to understand the message, for example reducing the complexity of their language. Individuals who may have communication support needs include those with learning disabilities, people with autism, those who have had a stroke or another type of brain injury, and people with dementia.

3.3   What is NOT included as an information and/or communication support need?

3.3.1   **Foreign language need** – accessible information needs do not include foreign language needs. Whilst it is very important that all service users receive information in a language they can understand, it is not covered by the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard. Note: where a service user requires both a foreign language translation and an accessible format, the accessible format should be provided in their chosen language.

3.3.2   **Preference** – the Accessible Information Standard does not cover an individual's preferred information format. Rather, the standard identifies accessible information needs that relate to disability, impairment or sensory loss. Staff will be responsible for ensuring that any needs which are identified are a genuine need and not a preference.

4 The Accessible Information Standard: stages and solutions

4.1 **<u>Step 1: Ask</u>**
This step of the Standard is concerned with **identifying the needs**.
The 'Accessible information and Communication support needs' questionnaire should be used to identify the accessible information and/or communication support needs of **all** service users and carers. This questionnaire should be completed as standard at all initial assessments, including for service users and carers who do not appear to have an accessible information and/or communication support need.

4.1.1 The form (appendix 1) is downloadable from the intranet on the Accessible Information Standard page (view page). Two questions should be routinely asked:

1. Do you have any accessible information or communication support needs
2. Does your carer have any accessible information or communication support needs

4.1.2 If the answer is YES to either of these questions, a further 4 questions will be asked to identify the details of these needs.

4.1.3 The accessible information and/or communication support needs of the service users and carers must be identified at the following points:
- ➢ New referral
- ➢ Formal and informal review (e.g. CPA, care review)

4.1.4 Where possible it would also be valuable for clinical staff to retrospectively identify the needs of their current caseloads.

4.2 **<u>Step 2: Record</u>**
This step of the Standard is concerned with **recording the identified needs**

4.2.1 Forms are available within RiO, IAPTus and EMIS for the recording of identified accessible information and/or communication support needs. As far as possible, the forms replicate the questionnaire template, allowing staff to quickly transfer the information gathered into the patient's clinical record (see screen shots – appendix 2)

4.2.2 There is guidance available on the intranet about how to access and complete the forms for each clinical record system on the 'Accessible Information Standard' (view page).

4.2.3 The clinical record form must be completed for all service users and carers at the following points:
- ➢ New referral
- ➢ Formal and informal review (e.g. CPA, care review)

4.2.4 This includes completing the form for:
- ➢ Service users and carers who have no identified accessible information and/or communication support needs (option within form).
- ➢ Service users and carers for whom it has not been possible to complete the assessment, for example because they are too unwell (option in form).

4.3 **<u>Step 3: Alert</u>**
This step of the Standard is concerned with **alerting staff to the identified need**

4.3.1 Patient alerts are available within RiO, IAPTus and EMIS which should be activated when an information or communication support need is identified. Staff will be required to manually add these alerts, which will then be visible on future contact (see screen shots – appendix 3).

4.3.2   There is guidance available on the intranet about how to add the alert for each clinical record system on the 'Accessible Information Standard' (view page).

4.3.3   When the alert is present, staff should review the accessible information and communication support needs form within the clinical record to identify the required support.

4.4   **Step 4: Share** **(contents)**
        This step of the Standard is concerned with **sharing information about the identified need**

4.4.1   Staff are required to share information about a service user's accessible information and/or communication support needs with other organisations and agencies involved with the service user.

4.4.2   The Accessible Information Standard specifies that information must be made available only to 'organisations or people who already have a 'legitimate relationship' with that individual and as such already have access to their patient or service user records'. Accessible information and/or communication support needs must only be shared with professionals and services involved, or soon to be involved, with a service user's health and social care. This includes referral routes within and between the organisation, between primary and secondary care, and across inpatient and community settings.

4.4.3   Staff are required to share this information in the following ways:
        ➢ As part of routine information sharing procedures
        ➢ At onward referral
        ➢ At discharge
        ➢ During handover

4.4.4   It is the responsibility of the staff member completing the referral/discharge/handover to ensure that the identified need is shared.

4.5   **Step 5: Act** **(contents)**
        This step of the Standard is concerned with **meeting the identified needs**

4.5.1   Once an accessible information and/or communication support need has been identified, staff are required to act in order to meet the need. This means being able to provide information in the correct accessible format, and being able to provide appropriate communication support. There are a range of solutions available to support staff in meeting the accessible information and communication support needs of our service users and carers:

4.5.2   Hearing impairment **(contents)**
        Many of the Trust service users have some degree of hearing loss. The type, cause and severity of this will vary from person to person, meaning that the appropriate solutions will also vary. The following solutions and advice are available:

        ➢ **Induction loops**: These systems help hearing aid users pick up sound more easily. Induction loops are available in all reception areas. Portable induction loops are also available at all relevant sites to be used in consultation rooms. Teams providing services out in the community have access to portable induction loops for 1:1 use that can be taken out into the community. The following resources are available on the 'Accessible Information Standard' intranet page, to support staff in using the induction loop devices (view page):
            o Induction loop summary including servicing arrangements (see appendix 4)
            o Induction loop user manuals
            o Induction loop poster for displaying to in clinical areas (see appendix 5)

> **Face to face British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting**: All staff have access to qualified and registered BSL interpreters through Newham Language Shop. More information can be found on the intranet ([view page](#)). Staff must ensure that a BSL interpreter is booked in advance of the appointment for all service users using BSL

> **Awareness training**: all staff have access to a Hearing loss awareness raising video which includes information about the types of hearing loss and tips on how to adapt the environment and your communication to better suit the needs of service users with hearing impairment ([view page](#)).

4.5.3 Visual impairment **[(contents)](#)**

Many service users have some degree of visual impairment. The type, cause and severity of this will vary from person to person. The following solutions are available to Trust staff:

> **Email format**: many service users with visual impairments will use screen reader technology to access information. A screen reader works by turning written text on screen into a spoken words, allowing them to access written material in the absence of sight. Through the Accessible Information and Communication support needs' questionnaire , service users who need to use a screen reader can select the option of receiving information via email for this purpose.

> **Braille**: all staff have access to a Braille transcription service through Newham Language Shop. More information can be found on the Accessible Information Standard intranet page ([view page](#)). Staff must ensure that all Braille users accessing Trust services are offered information in Braille formats. Service users should be informed that as information will be translated to Braille on a needs-only basis, there may be a delay in providing this. Staff should ensure that service users are offered an alternative format in the interim, for example emailed information which could be read by a screen reader ([see above](#)).

> **Large print**: many service users with visual impairments will have some residual sight but may require larger size text. Staff should identify and document what text size is required and ensure that this is used for all correspondence and written patient information. For conversion of documents with complex layouts, such as leaflets, all staff have access to a large print conversion service through Newham Language Shop. More information can be found on the Accessible Information Standard intranet page ([view page](#)).

> **MP3 formats**: some service users with visual impairments may prefer information in an MP3 format. All staff have access to a MP3 transcription service through Newham Language Shop. More information can be found on the Accessible Information Standard intranet page ([view page](#)).

> **Website tools**: service users with visual impairments have access to the following tools to increase access to information on the Trust website (www.elft.nhs.uk):
> o Browsealoud: text-to-speak software which will read written web information aloud
> o Increase text size: option to increase font size of written web information

> **Awareness training**: all staff have access to a visual impairment awareness raising video which includes information about the types of visual impairment and tips on how to adapt the environment and your communication to better suit the needs of service users with visual impairment ([view page](#)).

4.5.4   Learning disabilities
People with Learning Disabilities often require some additional support to access information and to communicate. The type and amount of support will depend on the individual and their needs. The below solutions and advice are available to Trust staff. Note that the majority of solutions relate to the provision of easy-read information. 'Easy-read' is classified as information that is presented in an accessible, easy to understand format. This is primarily for the benefit of people with learning disabilities but is often used more widely, for individuals who have difficulty understanding information in standard formats. When required, easy-read information should always be provided, ***in addition*** to the standard format.

➢ **Easy read leaflets**: All key Trust patient information leaflets are available in an easy-read format. This includes information on psychological therapies and mental health act information – (see screen shot appendix 6). The leaflets are available to all staff on the Accessible Information Standard page on the Accessible Information Standard intranet page (view page). Leaflets can be downloaded and printed as required.

➢ **Easy read appointment letters**: Service users requiring easy read format must be provided with this for all correspondence, including their appointment letters. All staff have access to easy-read appointment letter templates, which are downloadable from the Accessible Information Standard intranet page (view page). Appointment letters are available by either discipline or service type (see screen shot appendix 7). Staff can complete the relevant fields of the appointment letter and add a photo of clinician and appointment location. All staff have access to a catalogue of photographs of all Trust sites via the K:Drive 'Trust site Photographs'.

➢ **Easy read care plan template**: All staff have access to an easy-read care plan template, which can be downloaded from the Accessible Information Standard intranet page (view page). Staff should ensure that all service users are provided with an easy-read version of their care plan where required.

➢ **Easy read feedback**: There is an easy read guidance document available for any staff members completing DIALOG feedback with service users. Where needed, this guidance booklet can used with service users, to help them understand and complete the DIALOG form (view page).

➢ **Accessible complaints**: all staff working with the complaints department have access to easy read letter templates which can be used to feedback about the progress and outcome of complaints proceedings

➢ **Easy read picture banks**: The Trust has a multiple user licence for two picture bank companies. These companies provide images which are designed to support creation of easy read material:
  o Photosymbols – an extensive suite of photographic images.
  o CHANGE – an extensive suite of black and white illustrations, including more sensitive images.

Information about how to obtain a log in for these picture banks can be found on the Accessible Information Standard intranet page (view page). Images from the picture banks can be used to support communication during therapy sessions and in the creation of written easy read material.

➢ **Awareness training**: all staff have access to a learning disabilities awareness raising video which includes information about the types of learning disabilities and tips on how to adapt environment and communication to better suit the needs of service users with learning disabilities (view page).

4.5.5   Autism **(contents)**
People with autism may require some additional support to access information and to communicate. This may mean presenting information in a certain way, or adapting the environment to meet a sensory need. Autism awareness training is available to Trust staff to help understand the needs of our service users and carers with autism. The video training offers information and tips on how to adapt environment and communication to better suit the needs of service users and carers with Autism (view page).

4.5.6   Dementia **(contents)**
People with Dementia often require additional support to access information and to communicate. These needs are likely to change and increase with progression of the symptoms. Dementia awareness training is available to Trust staff to help understand the needs of our service users with dementia. The video training offers information and tips on how to adapt environment and communication to better suit the needs of service users with dementia (view page). Additionally, many of our service users with dementia may also have comorbid hearing and visual impairments, or may require information in an easy read format (see above).

4.5.7   Neurological disorders **(contents)**
Neurological disorder refers to any disorder of the brain or central nervous system. This can occur for a range of reasons, including stroke and traumatic brain injury. Many people with a neurological impairment will have some degree of impairment to their communication and their ability to access information, requiring additional support from staff. In view of this, all staff have access to awareness training about neurological impairments. This video training describes some of the types of neurological disorders and their impact on communication. The video offers tips about how staff can adapt their own communication and environment to meet these needs (view page).

Accessible Information and Communication Support Needs

Name:	DOB:
Date:	

1.

Do you have any accessible information or communication support needs	▼	Please select
		☐Yes
		☐No
		☐Not yet assessed

2.

Does your carer have any accessible information or communication support needs	▼	Please select
		☐Yes
		☐No
		☐Not yet assessed
		☐Not applicable

If the answer is YES to either of these questions, please ask the questions overleaf.

> **Note:**
>
> '**Not yet assessed**' should be selected **only** where it has not been possible to assess the information and communication needs, for example, because the service user was too unwell to complete the service user assessment questions.
>
> '**Not applicable**' should be selected **only** where the service user does not have a parent or carer involved.

Name of service user:	DOB:
Name of carer:	Date:

1. Do you/you carer need any of the following specific contact methods? (note this is a need rather than a preference)

	Service user need	Carer need
Email	☐	☐
Telephone call	☐	☐
Written	☐	☐
Text	☐	☐
Other (comment in box below)	☐	☐
No specific contact methods needed	☐	☐

2. Do you/your carer need information to be given in a specific format

	Service user need	Carer need
Easy read information	☐	☐
16 point font size	☐	☐
Braille	☐	☐
Audio format	☐	☐
BSL signed support	☐	☐
Other (comment in box below)	☐	☐
No specific information format needed	☐	☐

3. Do you/your carer need support from a communication professional

	Service user need	Carer need
BSL interpreter	☐	☐
Deaf blind manual interpreter	☐	☐
Other (comment in box below)	☐	☐
No communication professional needed	☐	☐

4. Do you/your carer need additional communication support

	Service user need	Carer need
Use pictures to support verbal conversations	☐	☐
Write down key information	☐	☐
Support person to use communcation aid	☐	☐
Longer appointment	☐	☐
Parent/carer to be in the appointment	☐	☐
Use simple language	☐	☐
Give additonal time to understand information	☐	☐
Advocate to be in the appointment	☐	☐
Ensure enviornment allows easy lip reading	☐	☐
Audio (hearing) loop system	☐	☐
Other (comment in box below)	☐	☐
No communcation support needed	☐	☐

5. Additional comments about information and communication needs

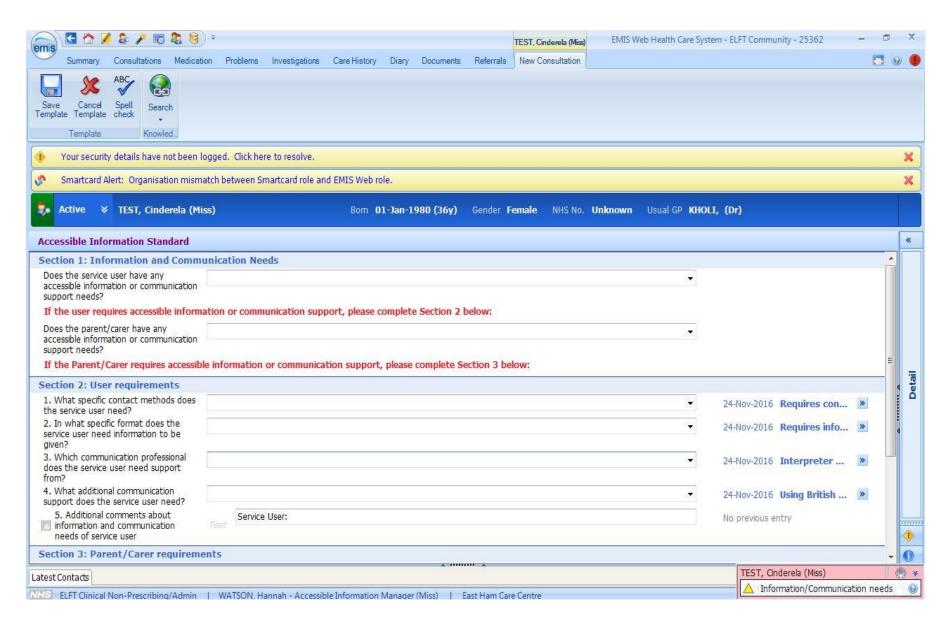**Appendix 2: Screen shots of the relevant sections of the electronic clinical records** [(contents)](contents)

Relevant Section of the RiO Clinical Record

Relevant Section of the IAPTus clinical record

Relevant Section of the EMIS Clinical Record

Appendix 3: Screen shots of electronic alerts in each of the electronic clinical records (contents)

RiO alert

IAPTus alert

EMIS alert

Induction (hearing) loop systems

What is an induction loop?
"Induction loop systems help people who are deaf or hard of hearing pick up sounds more clearly, by reducing background noise. They work in a particular area when a person's hearing aid is switched to the 'T' setting (or loop programme). This allows them to focus on sounds – such as a person speaking – from the loop system microphone, rather than the internal hearing aid microphone, which will normally amplify all noises in the area. The system helps hearing aid users to communicate efficiently and confidentially, even in noisy environments where deaf and hard of hearing people often struggle." (RNIB)

What systems are available across the Trust?
Trust sites have been provided with loop systems according to the type of clinical services based at the site:

1. Reception counter induction loop system – where Trust sites have a reception area that is accessed by ELFT service users, they have been provided with a PDA102 fixed induction loop. This has been installed at reception areas to help hearing aid users to converse with reception staff.

2. Meeting room induction loop system – where Trust sites have meeting and clinic rooms accessed by ELFT service users, they have been provided with a Conversor Pro portable induction loop. This portable loop system can be used to help hearing aid users to converse with staff in meeting room scenarios.

3. 1:1 portable induction loop system – where Trust sites have staff who see ELFT service users in the community, they have been provided with a PL1/K1 portable induction loop. This portable loop system can be taken out in the community and used to help service users communicate on a 1:1 basis with staff in a community setting.

How are the systems used?
Staff working in clinical services must ensure that the loop systems are appropriately stored, charged and switched on (as applicable). User manuals are available on the intranet to direct staff in using each of the induction loop systems visit page

What happens if the loop system is not working?
Clinical services are responsible for ensuring that the induction loop systems at their sites are in good working order and equipment must be repaired or replaced as required. If servicing, repairs and/or replacement systems are required, this should be ordered from:

> **Expression Media:**
> **Tel: 01457 899100**
> **email: info@expressionmedia.co.uk**

All installed (reception induction loop) systems carry a 12 month on-site warranty for parts and labour provided by Expression Media in-house engineering personnel. Portable systems (Radio based and portable induction loop) have a 12 month warranty with a replacement swap-out system in operation. i.e. when a fault is reported a replacement system will be despatched directly to site by courier and the faulty unit collected, repaired and returned to Expression Media. This will then be used as stock should future issues be reported.

Service calls will be carried out on an ad-hoc basis as required. These are charged at a rate of £105+VAT and cover routine adjustments and replacement of any consumable parts.

Damage to or missing main components will be chargeable and quoted separately. Clinical services will be responsible for covering the costs of servicing, repairs and replacement systems. Where multiple clinical teams are sharing hearing loss equipment, the cost should be shared between clinical teams.

East London **NHS** NHS Foundation Trust

Induction (hearing) loop systems

Induction loop systems help hearing aid users to pick up sounds more clearly, by reducing background noise.

All Trust sites have been provided with one or more of the following loop systems:

Reception counter induction loop system – PDA102 fixed induction loop are installed at reception areas to help hearing aid users to converse with reception staff.

Meeting room induction loop system – Conversor Pro portable induction loops are provided to help hearing aid users to converse with staff in meeting room scenarios.

1:1 portable induction loop system – PL1/K1 portable induction loops are provided for staff to use on a 1:1 basis with hearing aid users in the community

User manuals are available through the intranet, to direct staff in using each of the induction loop systems:
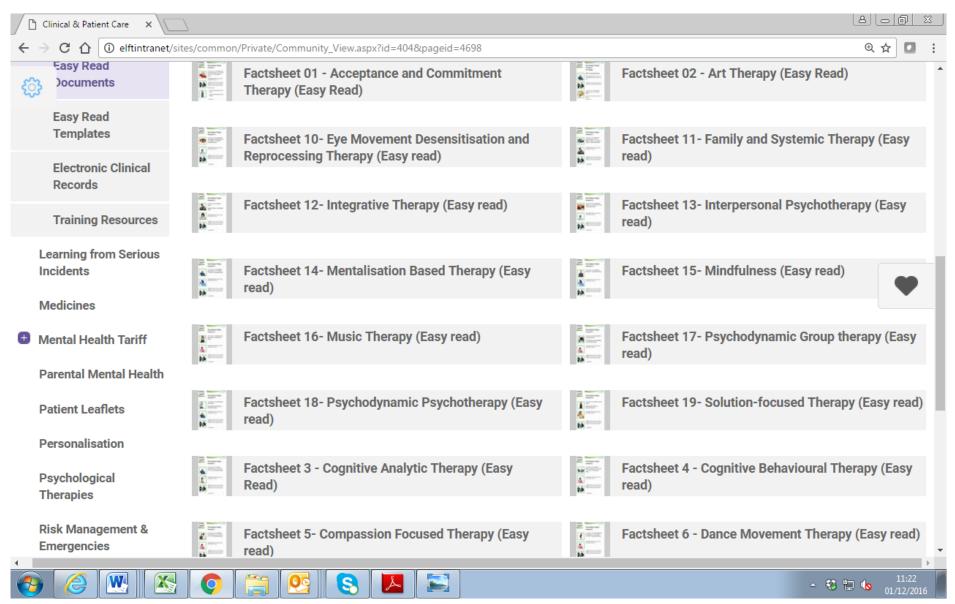
visit the 'Accessible Information Standard' page.

Clinical services should ensure that induction loop systems at their sites are in good working order and equipment must be repaired or replaced as required. If servicing, repairs and/or replacement systems are required, this should be ordered from:

Expression Media:
Tel: 01457 899100
email: info@expressionmedia.co.uk

Appendix 6: Easy read documents available on the intranet

Appendix 7: Easy read templates available on the intranet (contents)