

New Accessible Information Standard to ensure people with sensory loss can access information that 'Makes Sense'.

The Health Secretary has unveiled improvements to the All Wales Sensory Loss Standards, which help ensure people with sensory loss get information about services they can access and understand, as well as any communication support they need.

From this month, GP surgeries in Wales are being asked to identify and record the information and communication needs of their patients with sensory loss issues. The system will give GP surgery staff the tools they need to meet a patient's needs, such as how to generate letters in large print and add prompts to medical records.

The second phase will ensure that when a GP surgery refers a patient to hospital, their information and communication needs will be automatically sent with the referral, therefore increasing the likelihood of these needs being met.

At present, very little information of this kind is routinely captured and recorded in GP surgeries and hospital departments. This means it can be difficult to safely and effectively share information about a patient's communication needs within and between GP surgeries, hospital departments and other healthcare services.

Sensory loss affects people of all ages and there are more than 600,000 people in Wales with hearing or sight loss or a combination of both. These problems are particularly common in older adults with 70% of the population aged over 70 and over living with hearing loss and 1 in 3 people over the age of 85 living with sight loss in Wales.

In 2014, a survey by Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, RNIB Cymru and Sense Cymru reported that only 1 in 5 people surveyed had been asked by NHS staff about their information and communication needs.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said;

"Health inequality is an issue I'm committed to addressing here in Wales, by putting the needs of service users at the heart of how we deliver key public services, including health.

"People with sensory loss are more likely to experience major health conditions, as well as higher levels of mental ill health, therefore they need to be able to access all areas of healthcare, not just ophthalmology and audiology services.

"I'm pleased we are leading on the 'It Makes Sense' campaign this

year, which allows us to inform and remind health professionals of their legal obligations, to ensure that people with sensory loss are able to address all their health issues as easily as those without sensory loss. All health boards and NHS trusts will be required to implement the Accessible Information Standard."