

MANIFESTO 2022

The aim of inclusive communication is to reduce communication barriers and subsequent prejudice and exclusion from society. By making some small adjustments to how we provide services and make information available, we can make a big difference in the lives of many people and families in NI.



Create a communication inclusive Northern Ireland

We are calling on our political parties to:

- Mandate CAUK training across all public-facing services
www.communication-access.co.uk
- Ensure that adult safeguarding legislation enshrines communication support for all people in NI who require it, guaranteeing that the most vulnerable adults in our society can communicate their needs, wishes and feelings.

THE BACKGROUND

- The ability and opportunity to understand what's going on, express ourselves and be understood is fundamental to our lives. Effective communication allows us to live independently, build and maintain relationships, to work, to learn, to manage our lives and, of critical importance, to assert our own free will in the world.
- Speech, language and communication difficulties can be lifelong and present from birth - as part of a learning or physical disability or a stand-alone communication need, such as a stammer. Communication difficulties can also be acquired at any age, because of a head injury, dementia, stroke, a degenerative neurological condition, mental ill health or cancer.
- People who have communication difficulties can find everyday interactions difficult, they can often feel socially isolated and may struggle to access vital services and support - 80% of young people not in employment, education or training, experience communication disadvantageⁱ.
- People with communication difficulties are more vulnerable to becoming victims of abuse or maltreatment and are at greater risk of suffering mental health problems than their peers, commonly anxiety and depression.
- 50% of those with intellectual or learning difficulties report challenges accessing health services due to difficulties making appointments via telephone and a lack of support and accessible information when navigating health settingsⁱⁱ.
- Research in Scotland in 2018 found that only 73% of service users agreed that they easily understood information given to them, about their care, by their GPⁱⁱⁱ.

ⁱ Elliott N (2011) An investigation into the communication skills of long-term unemployed young men. <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.553779>

ⁱⁱ Allerton and Emmerson (2012) "British adults with chronic health conditions or impairments face significant barriers to accessing health services" available here: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0033350612002788?casa_token=b8D1zAlMjy0AAAAA:aq6HoHaAqKZFRubmoVsC_OaY92POlzPw6gC9ny0418yiOhuVKEmgdJRydcJ87vU8OrP0zHMxCw

ⁱⁱⁱ University of Strathclyde (2021) Financial case for Inclusive Communications -a report for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and Camphill Scotland.

^{iv} NISRA 02011 Census Key Statistics available at 2011 Census - Key Statistics for Northern Ireland | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nirsra.gov.uk)

^v <https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/docs/get-involved/rcslt-learning-disabilities-factsheet.pdf>

IN NORTHERN IRELAND

- At least 30,000 people live with long-term communication difficulties^{iv}.
- Up to 90% of people with learning disabilities have communication difficulties^v, 33% of Stroke survivors and more than 20% of people with brain injury will also experience some level of communication difficulties^{vi}.
- Research shows up to 60% of young people who offend in NI have low language skills^{vii} and a screening of a sample of the residents at Hydebank Wood College found that 75% of women and 100% of men assessed had speech, language and communication difficulties, these included receptive language difficulties (comprehension) and expressive language difficulties (use of language)^{viii}.

THE ECONOMIC BENEFIT

- While specific cost benefit analysis isn't available for Northern Ireland, recent evidence to inform the introduction of the Inclusive Communication Scotland Bill (2021) highlighted potential cost savings including:

Reduction in avoidable hospital admissions: research indicates that people with intellectual disabilities within primary care settings were more likely to receive inferior management of their health conditions^{ix}. By consequence, if required interventions are not received at the necessary time, the number of avoidable hospital admissions will increase^x.

Increase the autonomy and independence of service users and their families which would in turn, reduce pressure on public services.



CASE STUDY

By signing up to CAUK, an organisation commits to becoming communication accessible through free training and advice. Organisations can then display the Communication Access Symbol, inspiring confidence for services users.

- The Stroke Association NI became an early adopter of CAUK. Following staff and volunteer training and signing up to the CAUK standards, the Stroke Association received accreditation as a communication accessible organisation in 2020.
- Barry Macaulay, Associate Director for the Stroke Association NI, explains, "Around a third of people who have a stroke will experience communication difficulties. Stroke survivors often tell us how frustrating and isolating living with these can be. Better awareness of the condition and the right communication tools can therefore make all the difference."
- "CAUK has provided our team with the skills and confidence to engage with people with communication difficulties more effectively. Most importantly, becoming a 'communication accessible' organisation shows our stroke survivors that we are committed to supporting their needs. I would highly recommend the CAUK training to any organisation that wants to become more accessible and improve the lives of those experiencing communication difficulties."

vi <https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/rcslt-communication-needs-factsheet.pdf>

vii <https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/justice-evidence-base2017-1.pdf>

viii 2017-18 Speech & Language Therapy Pilot project – screening analysis provided by SLT, Health Care in Prison Team, SET, NI.

ix Cooper, SA, Hughes McCormack, L, Greenlaw, N, et al (2018) Management and prevalence of long term conditions in primary health care for adults with intellectual disabilities compared with the general population: A population-based cohort study. *J Appl Res Intellect Disabil*. 31(Suppl. 1): 68–81.

x University of Strathclyde, 2021, Financial case for Inclusive Communications -a report for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and Camphill Scotland.