



Jeremy Miles

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services

Welsh Government

5th Floor

Tŷ Hywel

Cardiff Bay

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17th October 2025

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Re: Accessible communication and information standards in healthcare

I am writing as Head of Wales Office for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to raise concerns about the recently published accessible communication and information standards in healthcare. We fully support the purpose of the standards but are very disappointed that speech and language therapists have not been directly involved in the creation of the standards given our expertise as a profession in supporting people with communication needs. Despite frequent requests from members, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists has not been consulted as a stakeholder for the creation of the standards.

Communication disability, difficulty, or difference is one of the most prevalent but least well-known barriers to accessing healthcare affecting children and adults in communities across Wales. Over **10%** of children and young people have a long-term speech, language, and communication need (SLCN)¹ and nearly **20%** of the population will experience communication needs at some point within their lives².

¹ Hartshorne, M (2006). The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication. ICAN Talk Series, No.2. London: ICAN

² Scottish Executive Social Research (2007). Communication support needs a review of the literature. <http://tinyurl.com/qzqzkpp>

Communication disabilities, difficulties, or differences can have a huge impact on people's lives and the lives of their families. For example, aphasia (a language disorder) affects a **third** of stroke survivors and can mean that stroke survivors may struggle to find the right words, speak in full sentences, or find it difficult to coordinate the mouth and tongue for speech. Many people with neurological disorders may experience changes in their voices. Up to **50%** of individuals with Parkinson's may have speech that is difficult for others to understand. **50% to 90%** of people with learning disabilities have communication needs or difficulties. A significant proportion of these individuals, around **half**, may have substantial difficulties with both expressing themselves and understanding others.

Communication needs, when not addressed, can seriously limit a person's ability to access health and social care services effectively resulting in poorer health outcomes, exclusion from care decisions, and reduced quality of life. It is essential that staff within health and social care are trained to support people with communication difficulties more effectively and reduce communication barriers. We warmly welcome the inclusion of people with communication needs under the standards but believe specific actions are required to make a step change in the support available.

We recommend that all healthcare bodies in Wales sign up to Communication Access UK as part of the implementation of the accessible communication and information standards. [Communication Access UK](#) is an initiative developed in partnership by charities and organisations that share a vision to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties. The symbol and free training supports inclusive communication for all. A Welsh language version of the training will be introduced in early 2026.

We understand that a series of workshops are being planned throughout the Autumn to help share the practical application of the accessible information standards. We would be pleased to be invited to take part in these workshop sessions in order to be able to share further details on Communication Access UK. We also call for local health board speech and language therapy services to be involved as key stakeholders in the implementation of the standards.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Pippa Cotterill

Head of Wales Office