

If you were using a communication aid
and motorised wheelchair how easy
would it be to attend a hospital
appointment at Hawkhurst Community
Hospital?



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Overview

Attending a hospital appointment can be daunting at the best of times. If you have additional communication needs it can be even more intimidating. The Accessible Information Standard (AIS) aims to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss are provided with information that they can easily read or understand so they can communicate easily with health and social care services.

In Kent we know that organisations have been working to ensure they meet the Accessible Information Standard and that every patient can access the information they need. We've worked with several hospital trusts over the last 5 years testing how they have managed to implement the standard. You can read the reports on our website. ([Link to page](#)) As part of the next stage of our work on AIS we wanted to test how Kent Community Health Foundation Trust has been applying the standard and supporting people who need help.

We worked with one of our volunteers who is living with Multiple Sclerosis and uses a communication aid. We wanted to test how an appointment at Hawkhurst Community Hospital would be for patients with similar communication needs

Do tell us your thoughts and share your own experiences with us. Contact us anytime for free on 0808 801 0102 or email info@healthwatchkent.co.uk or share your view [here](#)

WHAT WERE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

We worked with KCHFT to identify what site may be most appropriate to test. We informed the matron of the day and time of our visit.

Together with our volunteer we went to the main reception area to see how a patient with a motorised wheelchair and communication aid, would experience arriving for their appointment.

We gave verbal feedback to the Matron during the visit.

Feedback from our volunteer.









I wish all hospitals in Kent were more like Hawkhurst. I have been admitted to this hospital before and the staff are extremely good and patient. I know the Matron well. The whole team treat me with dignity and respect. The staff know my name and my AIS needs, so I find communicating here very effortless.




What did we find? What did we see?

Findings

-  The staff spoke directly to the volunteer and waited patiently for him to complete typing his sentences. Our volunteer had been admitted to this hospital before so was very familiar with the staff.
-  Hawkhurst staff are all up to date with all AIS training and the Matron ensures that all new staff complete AIS training modules within their induction programme.
-  There is a lot of information about communication support in the reception area and on notice boards. Noticeboards were at a suitable height for someone in a wheelchair to read easily.
-  Hawkhurst staff advised that when they receive patients via referrals, AIS information is not always included, and it means that Hawkhurst staff must complete an AIS assessment of their own. It also means that the patient may not have their AIS needs met until they have had an assessment on admission at Hawkhurst.
-  Hawkhurst also allow additional visiting times to permit for family members to translate should a patient prefer that to an interpreter.
-  Hawkhurst car park has large parking spaces which is good for mobility vehicles that need to unload motorised wheelchairs. There is a large wide ramp all the way to the reception door with automatic doors. Very easily accessible for our volunteer.

What have we recommended?

-  Feedback will be provided to the ICB and Kent Community NHS Foundation Trust on the importance of AIS assessments being included in the referral process, ensuring the smooth admittance for the patients. The introduction of communication passports may assist with this or continued implementation of a shared care record.

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We gather and represent people's views about any health and social care service in Kent.

Our role is to understand what matters most to people and to use that information to influence providers and commissioners to change the way services are designed and developed.

If you would like to chat with us about the report, you can reach us through the following routes:



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