



**BETTER HEALTH THROUGH BETTER
COMMUNICATION PROJECT**

**A pilot project aimed at improving access to primary
care services for people with communication
difficulties.**

**Final Report
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Executive Summary

The Better Health through Better Communication Project aimed to improve access to primary health care services for people with communication difficulties, for example people with learning disability, aphasia and / or literacy difficulties. It involved putting communication resources and skills into primary care facilities across North East Edinburgh and North West Edinburgh Local Health Care Co-operatives.

The project was driven by research on the needs of people with communication difficulties, legislation such as the Adults with Incapacity Codes of Practice (Part 5), the Disability Discrimination Act and policy such as the Scottish NHS Plan.

The project ran from February 2001 to June 2002 and progressed through the following stages.

- Introductory promotional presentations, aimed at “selling” the project, to each of the 34 practices in the NWE and NEE LHCCs.
- Development of standard symbols representing all health staff groups, locations and common procedures in consultation with users and providers. Symbols were developed in partnership with Bonnington Symbol System of the City of Edinburgh Council Social Work Department.
- Development and provision of communication resources (in consultation with users and providers) incorporating these standard symbols, for example door signs, appointment cards, medication charts and health advice sheets.
- Development and provision of Communication Skills Training to all primary care staff covering the impact of communication difficulties on access; the full range of strategies staff can use to support people with communication difficulties and guidance on appropriate use of communication resources.

Project success was further driven by extensive publicity and information targeted at clinical and policy teams and users to create top down and bottom up demand.

The project has produced several very positive outcomes including;

- More accessible and inclusive communication environments in 28 (85%) NEE and NWE practices.
- Development of standard symbols and a range of accessible literature focused on the needs of health service users and providers.
- Growth of a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary network of service providers and users with an interest and expertise in accessible communication environments including NHS Lothian, City of Edinburgh Council and the Voluntary Sector.
- Development of a model programme for the expansion of accessible communication environments across NHS Lothian.

Given these positive outcomes it is recommended that NHS Lothian implement a programme to establish accessible communication environments across all services.

Sample symbols:



Doctor



Dentist



District Nurse



Practice Nurse



Community Nurse



Health Visitor



Optician



Phlebotomist



Social Worker



Pharmacist



Interpreter



Midwife