Policy on Provision of Information To People We Support

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Authorised by:	**Colette Kelleher, Chief Executive**
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Policy Scope:

This policy applies to all staff working in Cope Foundation.

Policy Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that every person supported by Cope Foundation is given information in a way that they can access and understand, and in a timely manner.

1. Format of information

Any information given to people supported by Cope Foundation must be in a format they can access and understand easily. This includes:

- written information in easy to read format
- video format
- objects of reference

Which format is used depends on the persons literacy skills, verbal understanding and ability to recognise photos / symbols. Staff working with each person should have a good understanding of the abilities and strengths of the person they support, and should make a decision on the best format for the person in consultation with the person in charge of the residence / centre. Advice should be sought from other professionals (e.g. speech & language therapy) if the person in charge and the key staff are unsure of the most appropriate format to use.

2. Making information Easy to Read

All staff working directly with people supported by Cope Foundation will attend training in making information accessible once they begin working in Cope Foundation. In addition, staff should use the following guidelines when making any information easy to read:

- Easy to Read documents are made up of short, simple sentences that will communicate the most important messages you need to get across.

- These are usually accompanied by pictures that will aid understanding.
- Complicated concepts can still be explained in Easy to Read documents.
- You do not have to rewrite a document line by line. Just make sure you have the most important information.
- Keep your sentences short and start each new sentence on a new line.
- Explain difficult words if you need to.
- Put visuals on the left hand side of the written information.
- Make the font Arial size 14 minimum.
- Write numbers in numerical form i.e. 3, 5, 8 rather than the words three, five, eight.
- Avoid capital letters, apart from the beginning of sentences / abbreviations / where grammatically correct.
- Do not use bold / italics / underlining in the main body of the text. You can use bold to show subheadings and to highlight certain words or sections.
- Use even spacing between words, keeping it consistent throughout the text.
- Avoid splitting words at the end of a line, i.e. do not use hyphens.
- Avoid running sentences over two pages.
- Do not over simplify if you are writing a document for adults e.g. Stomach/ tummy.

Further guidelines and information can be found in:

'Make it Easy: A guide to preparing Easy to Read Information'(2011)

Inclusion Europe checklist: www.inclusion-europe.com/checklist

Mencap's Make It Clear: www.mencap.org.uk/make_it_clear

3. Support to access information and make choices

When giving information to any person supported by Cope Foundation, a member of staff will spend time with the person and give them any assistance they need to access and understand the information.

Information will be given to people as soon as possible, so that they have an adequate amount of time to understand the information and to make choices and decisions about it. If necessary, the information will be given to the person more than once, to allow them to make properly informed choices and decisions.

Every person supported in Cope Foundation must be given choices throughout their day, including at mealtimes. These choices must be provided in different formats (i.e. using photos / symbols / objects of reference / verbal language) according to the individual person's abilities and strengths. Staff working with each person should make a decision on the best format for the person in consultation with the person in charge of the residence / centre. Advice should be sought from other professionals (e.g. speech & language therapy) if the person in charge and the key staff are unsure of the most appropriate format to use.

4. Provision of information regarding day to day operations

Information will be provided to people on the day-to-day running of the residence they live in or the centre they attend in a format that they can access and understand. This involves providing:

- staff rotas using photos.
- daily activity schedules using photos / symbols / objects of reference / text.
- schedules of any planned outings using photos / symbols / objects of reference / text.
- signage on rooms around the building using photos / symbols / objects of reference / text.
- accessible notices regarding the complaints policy and procedure.
- accessible notices regarding emergency procedures and assembly points.

The person in charge of the residence / centre should decide on the formats needed for all of the above according to the abilities and strengths of each person living in the residence / attending the centre, in consultation with each person's key staff. Advice should be sought from other professionals (e.g. speech & language therapy) if the person in charge is unsure of the most appropriate formats to use.

Any staff rotas and schedules provided in the residence / centre MUST be kept updated according to changes in staffing and daily routines. This is to ensure that all people in the residence / centre have accurate information provided to them each day and reduces any potential confusion for people.

5. Local advocacy

Each residence / centre will have its own advocacy group which meets regularly, where this is practical and in the interests of best practice. This would ideally be a self-advocacy group with staff support provided. However if the people supported in the residence / centre are unable to advocate for themselves, then other forms of advocacy should be considered i.e. peer advocacy, family advocacy, staff advocacy. The person in charge should consult with Cope Foundation's Advocacy Working Group for advice around this.

Part of the advocacy group's role will be:

- ensuring that people in the residence / centre are provided with information in a format they can access and understand, and are given assistance and time to properly understand the information being given

- ensuring that people in the residence / centre are given opportunities to make choices and decisions throughout the day and are given the necessary assistance and time to make informed choices and decisions

- ensuring that people in the residence / centre are provided with information regarding the daily routine of activities, the daily staff rota and any planned outings or events. They should ensure that this information is provided in whatever formats are necessary for each person in the residence / centre to understand, and that any rotas / schedules are kept updated according to changes in the routine or in staffing

- ensuring that people in the residence / centre are provided with information regarding major events, policies and any developments / significant changes in the service. If the group feel that it is necessary to ask someone from outside the

residence / centre to speak to people about a topic, they should talk to the person in charge to arrange this

- ensure that people in the residence / centre are informed about what type of personal information is kept about them, who has access to it and how they may see it. Please refer to Cope Foundation's Data Protection Policy.

The person in charge of the residence / centre should meet with the group on a regular basis to pass on information and to discuss any concerns.

6. Induction for new staff

Any staff new to the organisation will receive training in the following once they start work:

- making information accessible, providing support to people to access and understand information, and
- developing visual schedules.

As part of a new staff member's induction into a residence / centre, the staff member will be given time to:

- introduce themselves to each person in the residence / centre and spend time with each person to get to know them

- discuss with each person's key staff what the strengths and abilities of that person are and what format information should be provided in for them

- review each person's communication passport (if available) to help them learn how the person communicates and accesses information