A pocket size guide to help NHSScotland staff meet the practical needs of patients with sensory impairment and communication needs will shortly be available.

Designed by NHS Education for Scotland (NES), the guide is being distributed to all Health Boards so that as many staff as possible who have direct patient care receive a copy. This will include administrative and support staff.

Gill Walker, an Educational Project Manager at NES, explained: “Over the past two years, we commissioned a company to develop and then deliver sensory impairment training across NHSScotland.

“The courses were delivered locally in each Board area and the feedback we received has been extremely positive: “I think that just being aware of potential issues has made me make slight differences in work practices such as asking if patients can hear/see me okay and have changed positions to make it easier for example: “I now realise that my initial awareness was quite narrow in scope and after the training day appreciate the width and range of people who may fit into the umbrella term sensory impaired”: “Without being patronising, it really does make you think of what we can take for granted and how easy it is to ignore someone’s basic rights”.

Gill continued: “We also commissioned a robust, independent, impact evaluation to assess the difference the training made to practice and ultimately the patient experience. This has confirmed the value of the training.”
The courses were hugely oversubscribed indicating that there was still a demand for this training. We wanted to find a sustainable way of delivering the training and commissioned the company which designed the face to face course - Commtacs – to develop the materials into an online resource which is available at www.tiny.cc/0xi5j

Andy Irvine, Director, Training & Development at Commtacs commented: "It's been one of the best experiences we have had in arranging and delivering courses. The participants have been so positive and keen to be involved, making our job easier."

"The reactions from the participants to the tutors being deaf or deafblind was always encouraging. All tutors involved in the delivery of courses are hard of hearing, deaf or deafblind which was certainly appreciated by participants."

"Receiving feedback that participants were going to make 'small changes' in their practice was excellent, especially when we know that these will make 'big differences' – this is rewarding in itself."

Following on from the training and the hugely successful Tip Cards for Midwives Caring for Pregnant Women with Hearing Impairment, a pocket size resource of communication tips has been designed for all staff and pre-registration healthcare students.

Welcoming its production, Elaine Savory, Equality and Diversity Officer with NHS Ayrshire and Arran said:  “From my experience, meaningful communication is vital in all contact a patient has with the NHS. This card will provide useful pointers to help staff in their day-to-day communication with patients with a sensory impairment."
Examples of the tips include:

- *Keep your face in good light and face the person who’s deaf. A light source will cast a shadow on your face making lip-reading difficult*

- *If another person joins the conversation, indicate to the deaf person who is now speaking by a hand gesture or a nod in the direction of the new speaker*

- *Contrasting colours to indicate furniture such as low tables, doorways etc assist visually impaired people in getting around*

Further information from: Christine Patch, Head of Corporate Communications:

christine.patch@nes.scot.nhs.uk or 0131 313 8059. A PDF of the Guide is available on request.

ENDS

Ref: 1101

Notes to Editors

1. NES is NHSScotland’s national education and training Board. We are responsible for supporting NHS services to the people of Scotland through the development and delivery of education and training for all those who work in NHSScotland: www.nes.scot.nhs.uk

2. Further information on Commtacs is available here: http://www.commtacs.co.uk/index.html