

GUIDE FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are often simple changes that would help the 1.4 million people with a learning disability in the UK get better healthcare. They are also a legal right: laws such as the Equality Act 2010 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005 demand that services adjust the way they work to enable people with a learning disability to access the support they need to gain the same health outcomes as the rest of the population.

Find out more about me

Using a document such as a Hospital Passport or an About Me profile is an important way of communicating and establishing effective relationships. A hospital passport tells healthcare staff things like:

- how the person with a learning disability like to communicate
- their likes and dislikes
- their health background
- their interests and the things they're passionate about.


First things first

There are a few considerations for making appointments accessible.

- Is your booking system easy to use?
- Are you able to offer appointment times at a quieter time of day?
- How can you confirm the appointment info in an accessible way?
- Do you have any visual information about the clinic or centre that the person can be sent to help prepare for their visit?
- Is your signage easy to read with clear, large font at an accessible height? And does it use simple words?
- Is the person comfortable using the waiting area or is there a quieter place the person can use while waiting if they prefer this?

More than one visit might be needed so keep this in mind, and the person might want to visit the clinic or centre first before their appointment.

Attending a clinic or centre might be intimidating or scary. A person with a learning disability might need reassurance or a quiet place to wait, to ease anxiety. They may also want to have someone there, who they trust, to support them.



Knowing what people's interests are can really help to break down barriers and improve communication.

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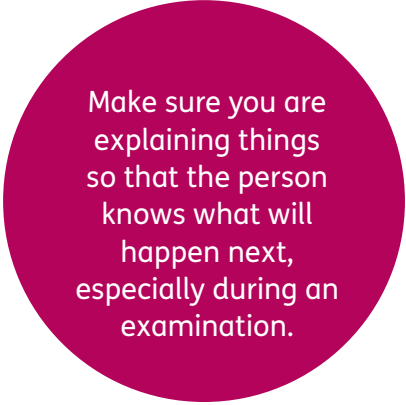
Take your time

Be flexible. Ensure you allocate a double appointment. Give clear information in short digestible chunks throughout the appointment.

You may also need to repeat and reinforce information a few times to check the person understands what you are saying.

Be prepared to make reasonable adjustments before and during an examination. This might be the most daunting part of a sexual health visit, and clinic staff need to be flexible. For example, blood tests can trigger negative associations and should be handled carefully.

Here is a [guide to making reasonable adjustments around blood tests](#).



Make sure you are explaining things so that the person knows what will happen next, especially during an examination.

Use visual aids

The use of visual aids, audio, objects and other resources can help a person to understand what you are explaining and enhance communication in the appointment. Find out what their preferred communication is ahead of the appointment so you can make adjustments and source the necessary resources.

[Easy on the I](#) is a fantastic image library with a range of images designed with and for people with learning disabilities.

Be mindful of confidentiality

Be aware that the patient may need or want a supporter present during the appointment. This is not necessarily a parent or carer but it could be.

If a supporter, carer or parent is present please make sure to always direct the questions at the person with a learning disability. The supporter might be assisting communication which can be very helpful however keep the conversation between you and your patient.

A supporter can offer support by continuing to reinforce the information provided after the appointment, but it's important to be mindful of confidentiality and to have an appreciation of whether the patient wants to share that information. You can read Brook's confidentiality statement [here](#).

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Always ask

Sexual health is part of broader wellbeing and it should form part of any general consultation with any young person. As individuals with special educational needs and disabilities are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, it's also a way of identifying risks or safeguarding concerns.

E.G “Any close cuddles or touching with someone special?” This can be used as an opener to ensure they want to be doing that, they understand what they're doing and they are protecting themselves.

Know your local expert


You're not alone! It's always good to ensure you're aware of your local network so you can signpost young people to an expert if needed.

Be a champion

Create a safe space where young people feel comfortable addressing their sexual health. Unfortunately misconceptions and stigma still surround sex and disability. You may need to be a champion for normalising conversation on this topic and be prepared to challenge existing beliefs.

Further reading:

Mencap's Treat Me Well campaign has more great tips about how to improve care for patients with a learning disability. See the [Treat Me Well FAQs here](#). Mencap has further advice and information about [sexuality and relationships here](#).



Mencap's website has a range of useful information, advice and resources.