

Communication tips

Achieving positive outcomes through open dialogue



General communication tips:

- don't be afraid to ask the individual when you are unsure about their request
- don't pretend to understand what a person is saying if you don't. Ask them to repeat or rephrase. Be patient and allow extra time
- allow extra time for appointments if you are using an interpreter
- look and speak directly to the resident, rather than carers and interpreters if they are also present
- when planning appointments, ask about any specific support a person with a disability might need - if a reasonable adjustment can't be made, let them know ahead of time and offer an alternative
- be patient when offering assistance and wait until your offer is accepted or refused
- check that the person you are talking to is following the conversation. Use plain language and don't waffle, use jargon or unfamiliar abbreviations
- relax and be yourself

LGBTQ+ inclusive communication:

- ensure language reflects diverse relationships (including the use of terms like partner)
- don't assume the gender of a person's partner; for example by asking 'is your wife picking you up'
- use the name, gender or pronoun a person asks you to use without exception
- consider terminology when creating resources or forms – have you included non-binary alongside men and women
- consider adding your pronouns (she/her) to your email signature as a sign of being inclusive

Communicating with deaf and hard of hearing people:

If using a BSL interpreter, look and speak directly to the resident, customer or carer

Hearing aids:

- even if someone is wearing hearing aids, it doesn't mean they can hear you perfectly – ask if they need to lip read
- don't shout – it can be uncomfortable for hearing and it looks aggressive

Lip reading:

- make sure you have face-to-face contact with the person you are talking to
- get the listener's attention before you start speaking by waving or tapping them on the arm
- find a suitable place to talk, with good lighting and away from distractions
- speak clearly and don't exaggerate your lip movements – this can make it harder to lip read – be natural
- offer a pen and paper if required

Communicating with ethnic groups where English is their second language:

- speak at a slower rate, which will make it easier for them to keep up with the conversation if they have basic English language skills
- use short sentences and use simple language

Communicating with blind and partially sighted people:

- identify yourself when you approach and don't assume the person will recognise you by your voice – never leave a conversation with a person without saying so
- use everyday language – don't avoid words like see or look or talking about everyday activities
- use accurate and specific language when giving directions e.g. the door is on your left and take the time to tell people where the important things are, like toilets
- to lead a person, check their preference and offer them your arm/ elbow to grip – keep your guided arm bent towards you

Communicating with people with learning disabilities:

- ask open questions (those that don't have yes/no answers)
- check you understand what they are saying
- watch the person – they may tell you things via their body language
- the use of visual aids may be of assistance