

# Top Tips For Supporting Someone With A Learning Disability To A Health Appointment



## DID YOU KNOW?

Research shows that people with learning disabilities die 16 years sooner on average than the general population.

Some of the most common reasons for this is thought to be problems with investigating, diagnosing and treating illnesses in people with learning disabilities.

*(CIPOLD, 2013)*

People with learning disabilities often do not get the most out of their health appointments.

As a carer, you have a key role in supporting people with learning disabilities to have better health outcomes.



**eQUALITY**

*for people with learning disabilities*



# BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT

1) Organise for an appropriate individual to go with the person for support.

Ask the individual to choose who they feel will be the best person to go with them, such as a paid carer, friend or relative. Make sure they know the person well, can support their communication needs, and have up to date information about their health. Is there a preference to male or female staff? Would they prefer to attend alone if they are able to?

2) Notify the hospital/department if you feel reasonable adjustments need to be made.

Are there any specific requirements needed? Think **TEACH**:

## T – Timing

**This might include:**

- Is a longer appointment time needed? It may be worth requesting a double slot.

## E – Environment

- Needing a quieter environment while waiting and during their appointment?

## A – Attitude

- Specific equipment such as wheelchairs or hoists?

## C – Communication

- Avoiding waiting times by requesting the appointment is at the beginning or end of day, or is fast tracked.

## H – Help

- Do they require hospital transport to get to and from?
- Would they benefit from a hospital pre-visit to get used to the environment?

3) Thoroughly read through the appointment letter.

Be clear on where the appointment will be, what time, who they will be seeing and other specific information about what will happen during the appointment.



# DURING THE APPOINTMENT

Many appointments are wasted because important information is missing.

**MAKE SURE YOU TAKE THE KEY THINGS FROM THE CHECKLIST WITH YOU.**

## APPOINTMENT CHECKLIST

<input type="checkbox"/>	Purple Folder
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food/fluid intake diary
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seizure charts/monitoring forms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Current medication list/MARs sheets
<input type="checkbox"/>	Menstruation charts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bowel charts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Weight/BMI records
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discharge summaries from recent hospital stays.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Care and treatment plans i.e. psychology and physiotherapy.

**1) Support the individual to communicate.** This may be with specific communication needs and methods, or may just be reminding staff to allow for more time to answer questions.

**2) Support the individual to understand what is happening.** This may be by repeating what others say with words/phrases you know they can understand. It may also be prompting staff to ask open questions such as 'what do you think this means?' instead of 'do you understand?'. Are they able to consent to treatments or procedures, or does the health professional need to complete capacity assessment and organise a best interest decision/meeting.

**3) Ask questions.** Don't be afraid to ask questions, or check things over if you are not sure about something. Encourage the individual to ask questions. It may be useful to bring a list of questions you may need to ask.



# AFTER THE APPOINTMENT

## 1) Keep records:

Record any outcome's of the appointment. Have they been referred for any investigations or has a follow up appointment been booked? Will a follow up GP appointment need to be booked?

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## 2) Purple Folder:

Make sure the Purple Folder is updated.

Ask health professionals to record that they have seen the person in the 'Health Action Plan' section of their Purple Folder including the action. Keep notes of what was discussed including any outcomes.

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## 3) Make appropriate referrals:

Is a referral to the Community Learning Disability Nursing Service or the Health Liaison Team needed?

If so contact the:

**Community Learning Disability Nursing Service**

on **03001234042** if you feel they require a Community Nurse to support with managing their health needs and liaising with GP's and other health professionals.

**Health Liaison Team** on

**01438 845372** or email **healthliaisonteam.referrals@hertfordshire.gov.uk** if you feel the individual needs specialist support to ensure hospitals are providing reasonable adjustment. You can also contact the team if a Purple Folder and extra pages are needed.

**Epilepsy Nursing Service** on **01442 453 017** for expert advice and support with managing and treating epilepsy and seizures.

