

# Tip Cards



Language and communication support

People from minority ethnic communities

People with a learning disability

People with a sensory impairment

Guiding people and assistance dogs

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## Achieving fair access

Achieving fair access is about removing the barriers which disabled people, from a range of backgrounds, experience when they use services.

In responding to day-to-day work you will encounter people with disabilities who may require assistance.

We have adapted these tip-cards from a resource developed by Fair for All-Disability ([www.fairforalldisability.org.uk](http://www.fairforalldisability.org.uk)) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) Scotland ([www.rcgp-scotland.org.uk](http://www.rcgp-scotland.org.uk))

They are not meant to be a comprehensive source of information on all disabilities but they will help you when you need some quick pointers in meeting individual needs. Using a combination of these good practice tips will be helpful for people with a range of disabilities.

## The words we use

Discrimination can start with language. If you use outdated terminology, people are more likely to think you do not have an understanding of disability or of their specific needs.

<b>Do say</b>	<b>Don't say</b>
Disabled people, people with disabilities	The disabled, the deaf, or the blind
Physical disability	Cripple, handicapped
Mr Smith has epilepsy	Mr Smith is an epileptic
Person with a learning disability	Mentally handicapped or mentally retarded
Deaf, profoundly deaf, deaf without speech	Deaf and dumb
Wheelchair user	Wheelchair bound
Mental ill health	Mental condition or mental disorder

**If you are in any doubt, ask, “how would you like to be addressed?”**

## Communication support

There are a variety of reasons why someone may use communication support. It is important to ask the person for their preferred type of support (eg: sign language, talking mats, etc) and not to assume what is best.

### Points to consider

- Use normal volume, intonation and grammar.  
Do not shout.
- Maintain natural eye contact and allow time for people to express themselves without interruption.
- Rephrase your message if you are not understood.  
Do not give up.
- Use closed questions so they can give yes and no answers.
- Listen and look out for expressive behaviours, such as facial expressions, body language, pointing.
- Don't pretend you understand the person if you don't.

## **People from minority ethnic communities**

A person's first language may not be English. Remember that although a person may be able to speak English, it does not mean that they can also read or write in English.

### **Points to consider**

- Avoid use of jargon. Use plain language with familiar words and short sentences as required
- Check that you have understood what the person is saying to you and that they understand you
- You may need to provide translations of leaflets, letters and information if required
- You may need the services of a trained interpreter. This should be provided free of charge.
- Respect that people may have cultural and religious differences, including dress and behaviour.
- Offer single sex interviews if required

## Meeting the needs of people who have a learning disability

The needs of people with learning disabilities are often overlooked because of communication difficulties.

### Points to consider:

- Talk directly to the service user rather than to a carer, personal assistant or advocate.
- Explain what is going to happen to help reassure and calm them.
- Avoid the use of jargon. Use plain language with familiar words and short sentences.
- Check that you have understood what the person is saying to you and that they understand you.
- Make sure any further information is available in an appropriate format, such as easy-read.
- Provide time and opportunities for questions.

## Meeting the needs of people who are deaf or hard of hearing

People who are hearing impaired vary in the extent of hearing loss they experience.

Points to consider:

- Find out the person's preferred method of communication in advance and book any support, such as British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or lip-speaker.
- Face the person when speaking. Make sure the area has good lighting and don't obscure your face.
- Use plain language and avoid slang words, expressions or jargon. Speak clearly but do not shout.
- Use appropriate facial expressions and hand gestures as visual clues, but do not exaggerate.
- Keep a pen and paper handy to write things down. Use diagrams if available.
- Check if you have been understood and repeat or rephrase if necessary.

## Meeting the needs of people who are deaf blind

Deaf blind people have combined sight and hearing loss which leads to difficulties in communicating, mobility and accessing information. The tips given on other cards for hearing and visual loss may also assist.

### Points to consider:

- Most deaf blind people will have some hearing and/or some vision. Deaf blind people use guide communicators.
- Always ask in advance for their preferred method of communication and book guide communicator support if required.
- Be flexible, as it may be helpful to use a range of communication methods.  
Details at [www.sense.org.uk](http://www.sense.org.uk)
- Make sure communication support is available for the whole visit, not only for the meeting. This will help the service user and all staff.
- Allow plenty of time for questions and check for understanding.



## Meeting the needs of people who have a visual impairment

People with a visual impairment will vary in the extent of sight loss they experience.

### Points to consider:

- Do not assume what the person can or can not see.
- Speak naturally and directly. Do not shout.
- Always state your name and who you are, even if you have only been away for a short time.
- Explain what is going to happen and make sure they are kept informed of what is going on.
- Make sure any information is available in an appropriate format, such as large print or on tape.
- Make sure you let the person know when you have ended a conversation and want to move away.

## Guiding people

A person, who is blind, partially sighted or deaf blind may not need, or want, your help. Always ask if they need assistance, but do not assume.

### Points to consider:

- Offer assistance but let the person explain what help is needed.
- Offer your arm and guide their hand to your elbow to allow them to grip it.
- State which direction you are going.
- The person may walk slightly behind you to gauge obstacles.
- Advise people of obstacles such as stairs, doorways, ramps, other people etc.
- When you have reached your destination describe the lay-out of the room to the person and ask if any further assistance is needed.

## **Assistance dogs**

An assistance dog will have formal identification and has been specifically trained and registered as a member of Assistant Dogs UK.

### **Points to consider:**

- A service dog can be identified usually by their harness or their identification coat.
- Dogs should not be patted or otherwise distracted when working or when in harness.
- Be aware that 'hearing dogs' may jump up onto their companion if telephones or alarms sound.
- If you are required to take the dog whilst assisting the person, hold the dog's leash and not the harness.

## Meeting the needs of people with mental ill health

Some people have mental ill health and can experience multiple discriminations. This can be due to a lack of understanding of their mental health and how it relates to their individual service needs.

### Points to consider:

- Provide more time for you both to explain and understand what is needed.
- Try and be flexible with meeting times. There may be some times of the day when it is unsuitable because of medication.
- Encourage people with mental health problems to have a friend, relative or advocate with them if they would like support.
- Some people with mental ill health may have had negative experiences of public services in the past. Listen and involve them in planning their individual service needs.

## Asking service users

Disabled people and their carers are the best source of information about the types of support they are likely to need.

### Points to consider:

- If it is a repeat visit, confirm that the previous arrangements will be provided and ask if anything could be improved.
- Ask the person if they would like a carer or relative to help them explain their needs to staff. It is important to get the person's consent before you involve other people.
- Welcome suggestions - encourage service users to give you feedback on their experience of our services.
- Agree with the person what relevant information should be included in any records and information sharing.
- Get together with your staff team and review what you have learned and how you can build that into your good practice.



## Further information



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