

Getting it Right in Reading

Top 10 Tips for communicating with people with a learning disability

Research shows that poor quality Health Information Exchange (HIE) can lead to “*less effective consultations, substandard treatment and insufficient patient follow-up*” (BJGP October 2016 Vol. 66 No.752 page 517: M Mastebroek et al.)

- Ask to see the patient’s LD Health Passport if they have one.
- Use short sentences using simple language and avoiding jargon Pause frequently, so as not to overload the person with words. Allow time to make sure that the person has understood (see Jargon Buster resource)
- Break information into smaller chunks so that one idea or concept is explained at a time
- Recheck the person understands you – e.g. “Can you tell me what I have just said so I know I have explained it properly”
- Be aware that many people have stronger receptive (understanding) communication skills than expressive skills
- A person’s expressive speech may sometimes give an impression of better comprehension than is actually the case, so check their understanding
- If you are in a busy environment with many distractions, consider moving to a quieter location as some people may find it hard to concentrate in such a busy place
- It can help if you can offer a visual aid such as a photo or drawing to support understanding (It doesn’t matter if your drawing skills aren’t very good)
- Use gestures and facial expressions. If you are asking if someone is unhappy, make your facial expression unhappy to reinforce what you are saying.
- Find a good place to communicate, somewhere quiet without distractions. If you are talking to a large group, be aware that some people may find this difficult.
- Ask open questions. These are questions that don’t have a simple yes or no answer.
- if the patient has autism you may need to ask more and carefully defined questions and remember the patient may have a literal understanding of language.
- Do ask parents/carers for their help.
- Use the ‘Pain Scale’ in the Resource pack and the body plan to show parts of the body.