



My Next Patient has a Learning Disability

Key Messages

Helping nurses, doctors, and health professionals



What you should always do

- Use your skills, knowledge, and experience when listening to people.
- Keep the patient and carer involved in all aspects of the care.
- Make reasonable adjustments in the way we work and to the care environment.

What you should think about

- How can you help the patient to understand their health needs?
- How can you involve patients in all aspects of their care?
- Who else can support the patient in planning and delivering their health care?

What you should never do

- Don't focus on the carer, friend, or advocate instead of the patient.
- Don't assume symptoms are part of the patient's learning disability.
- Don't use jargon or complex information.



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“Working in partnership with my patient and her mum really helped me - I learned a lot!”

As a nurse or other health professional, hospitals are a part of your everyday working life. For many patients, and even more so for people with a learning disability, hospitals may be frightening and confusing places, filled with unfamiliar people in unfamiliar buildings and new experiences.

To help care for the patient and involve carers and others in the patient's care, you can:

- Check that waiting areas, wards, and clinic rooms are comfortable and welcoming
- Check that there are clear signs, symbols, and pictures for people who do not read
- Where possible, speak to patients and carers beforehand to check what they might need
- Where possible, arrange longer appointments or appointments at less busy times
- Provide information about treatment and procedures in clear words and pictures
- Check existing records for clues to approaches that work best for the person
- Check what the person's condition means in general (e.g, Down's Syndrome) and what the likely associated health risks are for people with that condition
- Make reasonable adjustments to reassure and support the patient with their care