



Reasonable adjustments



The Equality Act 2010 creates a duty to make reasonable adjustments so that people who have a disability are not disadvantaged. They are small changes that can make a big difference to someone's experience.

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A best practice example

Reasonable adjustments are small changes that can make a BIG difference to someone's experience. and they are often easy and free to make.

Reasonable adjustments can be very bespoke and unique to the person. It is important to have a conversation with the person and record the adjustments that work for them.

Most importantly, you can't make reasonable adjustments for a person without involving them; ask, suggest and test. And make sure you add adjustments to the Patient Summary Care Record.

They can sound daunting, but don't let caution stop you from doing anything. Think creatively, share ideas and work together.

The following are real examples of basic adjustments that most people who have a learning disability and autism would benefit from.



All staff, including reception, nurses and doctors, are so welcoming and friendly

Our local surgery is very inclusive for people we support; people haven't been supported there for very long and the GP staff have already done so much.

Nobody has to wait for appointments and where people can't get to the surgery because of health issues a GP or nurse always comes to the house on the same day and escalates where necessary.

The surgery always contacts the house when people are due medication reviews, blood tests or their health check.

Someone we support has complex health needs, and while he was getting a PEG fitted GPs would come multiple times each week. Nurses continue to come out twice a week to support his health care and district nurses visit regularly too.

There isn't one contact we have at the surgery but all staff (including reception, nurses and doctors) are so welcoming and friendly. They explain everything and respond quickly when they use the online direct messaging service.

Emma, Dimensions Locality Manager



Accessible information

All organisations that provide NHS care and/or publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the [Accessible Information Standard](#).

This Standard aims to ensure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information that they can easily access and understand and receive the communication support they need from health and care services.

Making information more accessible can be as simple as using images to show what the words are explaining, making the font bigger and/or ensuring colours are clear with a contrast that's easy on the eye.

Here are some more ways of making communication more accessible:



Easy Read

Easy read is a way of writing documents that makes them easier to understand. Easy read normally follows these rules:

- Short sentences written in plain English.
- Pictures alongside the words to help explain things.
- Explanations of any long, difficult words or words that aren't used very often.
- Larger font size and a clear font type.



Use our template with guidance to make your own Easy Read documents: [Easy Read template and guide](#)



Social stories

Social stories are a way of preparing for a journey step by step. They break the journey down using key activities and times, such as leaving the house at 1pm and getting on the bus when it arrives at 1:15pm.

They have pictures to help visualise what to expect and explain where things might not go exactly to plan (such as the bus being late). There are pictures of dates and clocks. It is best to use photos of places that the journey involves, especially if they are travelling somewhere unfamiliar.



Use our template with guidance to make your own social stories: [Social story template](#)

Communication

Supporting communication is one of the most important ways of making sure people get the most out of their health appointments and that their health needs have been fully understood. Here are some top tips.



Time and understanding

Give the person time (ideally 7 seconds) to process what you have said before they respond.

Avoid leading them into an answer. They may say what they think you want to hear instead of what is accurate for them.

Check understanding, both yours and the person's, by asking open questions and offer to follow up verbal discussions with a written note or a voice or video recording.



Communication aids

There are lots of resources that can support communication, including social stories, image-based books and videos.

Objects of reference are a helpful tool. Show any equipment or machines that might be used and pre-empt any problems by explaining any noise that the machines may make.

Be flexible with your patient and open minded to their style of communication. There are lots of different ways you can work together to get the most from their appointment and a little open mindedness can go a long way.



Work with support workers

Work with supporters alongside the patient to help understand what the issues are and communicate about health.

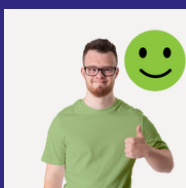
This is especially important for people who do not use words to communicate. They can help you to understand how the person communicates and provide you with important health information.



Don't use jargon

Explain things clearly, without using jargon or abbreviations. For example:

- | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| • 'I'm going to check if you are a healthy weight for your height' | Instead of... | • 'I'm going to check your BMI.' |
| • 'I'm going to prescribe medication that should only be used when you are feeling unwell' | Instead of... | • 'I'm going to prescribe PRN.' |
| • 'Could you tell me if you have any pain anywhere/how you are feeling unwell' | Instead of... | • 'Could you tell me your symptoms?' |



Tips and advice

We all appreciate some tips and advice when going somewhere or experiencing something unfamiliar.

If your practice has a particular way of working then give your patients advice and information on this in advance, it is particularly important to give them information about who they should contact to ask for help.



Share this document with your patients so they can easily share how you can make their appointment more accessible: [Tips to help me at the doctors](#)



Share this document with your patients so they know what to expect at their Annual Health Check: [Easy Read How to Get an Annual Health Check](#)

Decor and the environment

For your disabled, neurodivergent patients and patients with a learning disability there are many obstacles to overcome at a GP surgery. Even the clinical setting can be overwhelming and may cause sensory overload.

There are some small changes you can make to the environment:

- Turn some of the lights off.
- Provide a separate waiting room.
- Remove bright and garish posters and decor.
- Put some plants in the waiting room and open window blinds.
- Put up signage to areas such as reception, the exit, lifts and toilets.
- Turn off the TV, radio or patient call system if this is particularly noisy.
- Make sure there is enough space for someone using a walking aid, wheelchair or mobility scooter.
- Make sure the disabled toilet is clear of clutter, the emergency cord is hanging appropriately and it's ready to use.
- Make sure weighing scales and other equipment is clear to see and someone is available to help guide the patient through what to do.

We worked with building management company Assura to develop a toolkit for you to use. Our research identified and advises on 4 key themes...



Independence, choice and control; Healthcare buildings must not increase an individual's dependence on others. Just 22% of disabled patients feel independent in healthcare environments.



Dignity; Less than half of respondents felt toilet facilities in primary care met people's needs. Changing Places facilities were highlighted as an important adjustment and should be made available where possible.



Customer service and patient care; Environmental stressors are made worse when patient care isn't supportive or respectful.



Feeling relaxed; Décor, lighting, noise levels and waiting room layout were all highlighted as factors that affect how people feel when visiting their healthcare building. Almost half of those who support people to attend healthcare appointments reported feeling personally stressed, and 55% also stated that the person they supported felt stressed.

Respondents told Dimensions that the skills, knowledge, training and attitude of people working in primary care is important.



Download the toolkit to assess and track changes you can make to your practice building: [Building Better Together Toolkit](#)

Adjustments to appointments

Booking an appointment and making sure you're there on time can be difficult for many people. For someone who is anxious about going to their appointment, or requires support to go, the booking process is more difficult.

If possible, make some slots available each day for patients who have a learning disability and make these appointments longer than average. This will give them the chance to call later in the morning or book even further in advance. This is important because some people might need longer to prepare for their and get plans in place to accommodate attending.



Paul's support staff prepared a flask of tea, a couple of biscuits and his favourite mug

Being in unfamiliar surroundings with unfamiliar people caused Paul, supported by Dimensions, great anxiety, but it's important he goes to his local surgery. To help prepare, staff booked a taxi for Paul to and from the surgery every Friday.

To put him at ease, Paul's support staff prepared a flask of tea, a couple of biscuits and his favourite mug. At first, the staff at the surgery arranged things so Paul could sit down and have his tea and biscuits straight away.

After six weeks they began to guide him into the consultation room.



Sometimes you might find that your patient cannot make it to their appointment or needs get comfortable with attending the practice before transitioning into the GP or nurse's office.

If you can work with all staff to accommodate this it will not only make your patient more relaxed and open to discussing their health concerns but it will also give their support team time to prepare information you can use.

Ask, listen and share

Your patients and their circle of support are the experts. Ask them what the practice can do to best support them and listen to their suggestions.

It's important to share your work. This doesn't just mean telling patients what you're doing but telling other practices, providers and facilities too. Learn from each other so that, if a patient's care is transferred, so do their adjustments.