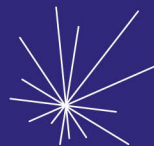




CVD Prevention

Health
Innovation
East Midlands



Driving Innovation and
Improvement in CVD Care



July 2024

Communicating About Cardiovascular Health & Reasonable Adjustments Top Tips

Health Innovation East Midlands (HIEM) are 'the innovation arm of the NHS' for the East Midlands. We are supporting a number of cardiovascular disease (CVD) innovation and improvement projects across the region and are committed to sharing good practice through education within our Lipid Optimisation Workstream and CVD Prevention Programme.

In Spring 2024 HIEM ran a series of focus groups to understand patient and public insights and experiences of cardiovascular care in the East Midlands. Communication challenges were consistently raised as a theme within these sessions. As part of HIEM's ongoing commitment to use patient and public voice to drive change in the NHS, we have subsequently produced a podcast with local clinicians discussing how they feel communication can be better facilitated in both GP and secondary care clinic appointments. Supporting this discussion was a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) from Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Trust specialising in supporting Adults with Learning Disabilities & Autism and advising on communication reasonable adjustments. To supplement the recording the SLT team have kindly supplied the following information to further advise good communication practice when discussing cardiovascular health with all patients, and when making reasonable adjustments.

The role of HIEM and this document is not to provide clinical advice, but to connect practitioners with well-sourced, reputable information.

Why Reasonable Adjustments?

NHS England states that reasonable adjustments are a legal requirement to make sure health services are accessible to all disabled people. Examples include:

- Making sure there is wheelchair access in hospitals.
- Providing easy read appointment letters.
- Giving someone a priority appointment if they find it difficult waiting in their GP surgery or hospital.
- Longer appointments if someone needs more time with a doctor or nurse to make sure they understand the information they are given.





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From 1 August 2016 onwards, all organisations that provide NHS care and/or publicly funded adult social care have been legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The Standard sets out a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents with a disability, impairment or sensory loss.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It states that disabled people have the right to reasonable adjustments that make jobs, education and services accessible to them.

Before The Appointment

Top tips to help prepare for an appointment with a patient who has communication needs:

- Do you know how they person prefers to communicate?
- Do you need to plan for extra time in the appointment or need to book an NHS approved interpreter?
- How will the person understand any information sent to them before the appointment such as an appointment letter? Do they need an easy read version, a telephone reminder on the day, the information given in a different language, or informing in another way?
- Are they planning on bringing a family member or carer with them to support the appointment? Does the support person have any communication needs themselves?
- Are there any capacity, consent or safeguarding considerations?

During The Appointment

Top tips for supporting a person with communication needs during an appointment:

- Make sure that you are speaking to the patient first and foremost and include carers as a support. Do not talk to the carer instead of the patient.
- Assess the patient's capacity to make choices about their care and treatment and think about communication reasonable adjustments you need to make ensure they have the chance to understand and make choices. Where best interest decisions need to be made about a person's care and treatment, good practice is for this to be a multi-professional/ multi-agency decision including family/ carers and involving the patient and their wishes as much as possible.
- Think about your environment in which the appointment is taking place. Does the person have any sensory needs? Are there any distractions? What will help the person concentrate and engage with you?
- Talk slowly and clearly. Use simple, everyday language and 'easy' words.
- Break information down into chunks and give one main piece of information or instruction at a time.
- Give the person lots of time to process what you are saying/asking and respond.
- Avoid ambiguous language, subtle jokes and sarcasm.
- Make it very clear when you change topics: 'we're going to talk about ... now'.
- Draw or show symbols/pictures and/or videos when it is necessary to talk about more abstract or complex topics.



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- Before you end the appointment, summarise and repeat the key points. Ask the patient what they can remember and/or ask questions about the information that has been given to check their understanding. Try and avoid closed yes/no type questions.
- Write down the key points so they, or someone else, can read and remember what you have said after you have met. Are there easy-read leaflets that can be taken away or written information in other languages? Use an NHS approved translation service to translate documents and leaflets not available in the person's first language.
- Ensure that there is adequate time for questions at the end of the appointment.
- Consider if any extra support is required for blood tests.

At The Pharmacy

In addition to the above consider:

- Does the person need support in understanding their medication and how to take it?
- Consider also providing information about their medication in writing or with pictures and symbols.
- Does the person understand when to take their medication? Consider if they need a timetable or dosette box.
- When supporting someone's understanding about medication, remember that the same drugs can look different from different suppliers. When ordering and dispensing try to avoid the person's medication suddenly looking different. Take pictures of the specific medication they have as a support to any written/ pictorial information.
- Will the person be supported by others to take their medication? Are you confident that the support person understands the medication requirements?

Secondary Care

In addition to the above:

- Ensure that the person's communication needs are highlighted within referrals to specialist care where possible.
- Does the person have a 'Hospital Passport' or 'Health Action Plan' explaining how best to support them?
- Ensure appointment letters and supplementary information (such as around fasting blood tests) are sent in a format and language that can be accessed by the patient.
- Consider if any adjustments are required for clinical tests. Give the person information about any tests they will have in advance of the appointment.
- Consider if a face to face or virtual appointment would be most suitable for the patient. Consider any visual or hearing impairments and the impact of these on tele-care consultations.

Annual Health Checks

Ensure that patients with a learning disability or autism are invited for an annual health check from their GP surgery. It is important that everyone over the age of 14 who is on their doctor's learning disability and autism register has an annual health check. These annual



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health checks are essential for identifying health concerns early, including around cardiovascular health and lipid management. Patients and carers should be encouraged to highlight if they are anxious or reluctant to attend their annual health check and reasonable adjustments then put in place to support the appointment.

Useful Resources

NHS England Information of Reasonable Adjustments:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/improving-health/reasonable-adjustments/>

Accessible Information Standard & Resources:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/patient-equalities-programme/equality-frameworks-and-information-standards/accessibleinfo/>

Public Health England's Reasonable Adjustments Guide:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/reasonable-adjustments-for-people-with-a-learning-disability>

Equality Act: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Easy Health Online Easy-Read Health Leaflets & Resources:

<https://www.easyhealth.org.uk/>

Mental Capacity Toolkit Resource for Assessing and Supporting Capacity and Best Interest Decisions: <https://mentalcapacitytoolkit.co.uk/>

Mencap Resources on Reasonable Adjustments in Hospital for People with a Learning Disability: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/resource/reasonable-adjustments-people-learning-disability-hospital>

Oliver McGowan Training: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/learning-disability/current-projects/oliver-mcgowan-mandatory-training-learning-disability-autism>

Royal National Institute of Blind People: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/>

Royal National Institute for Deaf People: <https://rnid.org.uk/>

Please note any clinical opinions/ views shared here remain those of the clinician/s and are not necessarily those of Health Innovation East Midlands.

Any case studies, links or other information (not directly produced by HIEM) is for the purpose of sharing approach, successes and learning as identified by the clinicians involved. HIEM does not declare or promote this information as 'best practice'.

Readers are advised to follow the latest national and local clinical guidelines for their area.

Clinical advice and guidelines change – please take note that this material has been published in July 2024, and any guidance shared or discussed may be superseded in the future.

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