
During a consultation, continued

When trying to get a measure of time use pictures of sunrise or beds to establish how many days or nights a symptom has persisted.

Link symptoms to an 'index event' - something important to the person, such as a birthday, holiday or death. Confirm the corresponding dates with a carer.

When explaining how often to take medicines, go beyond 'twice a day'. Better to say, take this with breakfast and tea.

Be careful to check that the patient has understood. Do they give consistent answers if questions are re-phrased?

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Community Nursing

Services Employs

a Learning Disabilities Nurse

The Learning Disabilities Nurse is based at the Lerwick Health Centre, but works in all areas of Shetland

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An answer service is in operation and all calls will be returned

Contact Andrea for further copies of this leaflet or for any other

information.



Learning Disabilities Service



Successful communication with individuals who have a learning disability.

**A Guide for
frontline
NHS staff**

This leaflet is designed to point to best practice and to give guidance to NHS staff who interfaces with the public.

“A Learning Disability can be defined as a significant lifelong condition which has 3 facets:

Reduced ability to understand new and complex information or to learn new skills.

Reduced ability to cope independently.

A condition which started before adulthood (before the age of 18) with a lasting effect on the individuals development.”

The Same as You?
Scottish Executive 2008

Preparation before a consultation

Time will be required to communicate effectively and to check out that the person understands the information. Double appointments/extra time may be required.

Where possible, offer the first appointment of the clinic. Waiting, crowds and lack of space may distress and upset the patient.

Offer a double appointment to give the patient more time to express themselves and to understand any advice.

If the person is not able to receive verbal information, it may be necessary to approach the carer or a family member.

Always seek permission to do this and continue to include the person in the dialogue with eye contact.

During a consultation

Speak clearly, maintain eye contact and allow the person to see your lips move.

Whenever possible use leaflets, pictures or other aids which could help the patient understand, i.e communication toolbox in yellow file.

Use gestures, facial expression and body language to supplement words.

Use simple language and short sentences.

Avoid abbreviations and metaphors which could be taken literally eg “wait a minute”.

Reduced distractions ie TV’s, telephones, other people.

If using visual aids or diagrams which include body parts, especially internal organs —ensure they are within the context of the whole body ie a picture of a kidney will mean nothing on its own!

Continued overleaf...

At least 50% of people with a Learning Disability have a significant communication difficulty.

Pictures or symbols are a more permanent form of communication and allow the person to process information more easily than listening to the spoken word.

Many people may have added visual and hearing difficulties.