



SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPROVE

COMMUNICATION

There is no one-size fits all way of communicating with disabled or non-disabled clients, it's about finding out what each individual needs from you as their adviser.

This said, there are some things you can do to help communications with clients who have disabilities.

Here are a few examples:



Ask clients whether they need help or not. If they do, ask what help they need rather than making assumptions about their disability and what they may need.

Only refer to their disability if or when it is relevant to the conversation.

Talk directly to clients with disabilities, not towards interpreters, advocates or companions who may be present.



For clients who are blind or have visual impairments;

*Be descriptive when you speak e.g. explain that the chair is about 50cm to their left, don't just say 'it's over there'.

*Ask whether they would like you to guide them. If they say yes, offer your arm, don't grab their arm or push them.

*Always ask permission before interacting with a client's guide dog.

For clients who have difficulties speaking;

*Find a quiet space for your conversation.

*Be patient and allow your client time to speak.

*Don't interrupt them. Watch their body language to help you know when they have finished speaking.

*Assume they can hear well and understand you unless you learn otherwise.

*If you don't understand something they've said it's okay to be honest and politely tell them this 'I'm sorry, I didn't understand that, can we try again?'



*If it's easier for them, establish their advice needs by asking questions that they can answer with a 'yes' or a 'no'. Allow them plenty of time to answer.



For clients with learning disabilities;

*Use plain English, avoid jargon.

*Don't rush, allow your client time to take in what you are saying.

*Use Easy Read materials. These are materials that break down text into small, easy to understand sentences, supported by pictures to convey the meaning of the words.



Further information:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>
Guidance on communicating with someone on the Autism Spectrum.

<https://www.sense.org.uk/content/communicating-people-who-are-deafblind>
Tips for communicating with people who are deafblind.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/using-a-range-of-communication-channels-to-reach-disabled-people>
Government guidance on communicating with disabled people through a variety of media, including marketing materials and events.



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