



## Improving access for people with a learning disability

*Achieving access for all*





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If someone has a learning disability, it means that they may find it more difficult to learn, understand and communicate. Learning disabilities are not a “mental illness”, but can be caused by many illness or problems before or during birth, or that develop during childhood or as the result of an illness. People with learning disabilities may also need more help with everyday tasks but with the right kind of help and support, they are often able to go to school, college and live and work completely independently. Learning disability covers a wide range of differing abilities. As with other disabilities:

- Do not assume someone can or cannot access information;
- Be guided by them;
- Follow the guidelines on making text accessible.

The following guidance will help you assist people with learning disabilities.

- Use images or symbols in a storyboard style where possible, to illustrate information. Remember to keep graphics to the right side of the page;
- Hand signs, taken from the Makaton and Sign-along vocabularies, are used by some people with a learning disability and/or a hearing impairment to help them understand information more easily;
- Putting information on video or DVD can be especially helpful;
- Some people with a learning disability can find meeting an unknown person or an unknown environment especially stressful. If interviewing someone with a learning disability do not rush them. Allow them the time and space to express themselves. Being welcoming and informal can also help the person relax and gain confidence in you;
- If inviting someone with a learning disability to a meeting, arrange for a named person to meet them, at least on arrival. This will help to overcome any anxiety;
- Give advanced notice for meetings and make sure meeting papers go out in good time;
- Give information in a clear manner using commonly used language not jargon. Be ready to explain any technical terms used;
- At the end of an interview go through what you have discussed. Offer to write the information down for the person;
- Allow extra time for consulting or working with people with learning disabilities.