



How social care staff can support people with learning disabilities when they are admitted to hospital



Going into hospital can be frightening and confusing. It can be even more stressful for people with learning disabilities who may struggle with an unfamiliar environment and not understand what is happening.

People may go to hospital as an out-patient or they may be admitted to stay in hospital either in an emergency or planned in advance. Social care staff have an important role to play in all of these situations.

What you can do before an admission to hospital



A hospital admission could happen at any time so it is good to be prepared.

Hospital passports can help hospitals by giving them information about the person. This will include information about their health but also information about what they like and dislike. The information needs to be up to date.

This information can help hospital staff to know how to make the person feel comfortable. There are [examples to use](#).¹

What you can do when a hospital admission is needed



Most hospitals have a nurse whose job it is to help make sure people with a learning disability have the best possible stay in hospital. These nurses are often known as acute liaison nurses. You can ask the hospital who this nurse is and how to contact them. For planned admissions it is best to contact the acute liaison nurse and ask for a pre-admission meeting. The person with learning disabilities should be part of these meetings if possible.

Talk about what support the person might need during the hospital stay and who is best placed to provide this.

A visit to the ward before the admission can be very helpful. You can introduce yourself and the person concerned to staff.

For unplanned admissions, arrange for a meeting to take place as soon as possible after admission.

What you can do during a hospital stay

Make sure that hospital staff read the hospital passport.

Hospitals have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled people. You should let the hospital know what reasonable adjustments would help the person while they are in hospital. There is an **information sheet** about this.²



Provide any support that you have agreed.

Help the person to understand any procedures and what is happening.

What you can do when a hospital stay is ending

Ask for a discharge planning meeting with ward staff and the local authority care manager or hospital social worker.

Continue to request an assessment of changed needs from the person's local authority if needed, to make sure they have enough support to meet their needs. It is important to distinguish between temporary increased needs while the person get better and longer-term needs from new disabilities. Ask the hospital staff when the person leaves hospital how far they should be able to get back to the levels of mobility, capability and independence they had before coming into hospital.

Make sure that recovery after discharge is properly monitored and that the person does regain the abilities they should.

Think about what will be needed at home in the short and longer term, discuss this with the care manager or social worker, and confirm who will be doing what and when. Ask about getting them moving again and if there are any exercises they should be doing.

Make sure everyone who needs to know (such as the person's GP or learning disability nurse) is aware of when the person will be leaving hospital and knows who to contact if there are any concerns after discharge.



Where can I find more information?

The information from this briefing sheet is taken from a longer report called **Working Together 2**.³ This also gives advice about what hospital staff can do to help someone with learning disabilities when they are admitted to hospital.



Use websites like **Easyhealth**⁴ and **A Picture of Health**⁵ to find easy-read information and videos about hospital admissions and some of the procedures people may have in hospital.



Key messages:

- hospital admissions can happen at any time so it is good to be prepared. This includes having a hospital passport ready and up to date
- if the admission is planned there are things that can be done in advance to help the stay go well. The learning disability or acute liaison nurse can help, find out who they are
- the person may need some reasonable adjustments made during their stay. Tell the hospital what will help the person
- you can support the person during their stay by helping them to understand what is happening. There is easy-read information to help with this
- urge hospital staff and social workers to plan for the person's discharge to help this go smoothly and to ensure they make as full a recovery as possible

This is the ninth in a series of health factsheets for social care staff. You can find others and more [guidance](#) for social care providers.

There is a [supporting set of slides](#) for this document that can be used by social care staff as a training resource.

The pictures in this factsheet are from Photosymbols: www.photosymbols.co.uk

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¹ www.easyhealth.org.uk/listing/hospital-passports-%28leaflets%29

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/655373/Social_care_staff_supporting_reasonable_adjustments_in_learning_disabilities.pdf

³ http://www.ndti.org.uk/uploads/files/Working_Together_2.pdf

⁴ <http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/>

⁵ <http://www.apictureofhealth.southwest.nhs.uk/>