

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Letter to Paramedics, Healthcare Staff and First Responders

If your relative has to go to hospital in an emergency, it is important that paramedics and other first responders are able to understand their needs.

The letter below has been written to help medical staff to understand and assess a person with a severe learning disability. We would suggest keeping this and a copy of your relative's hospital passport together to ensure that all the information that may be needed is available should your relative need to go to hospital.

A template hospital passport can be found here:

<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/learning-disability-assets/templatehospitalpassport1.pdf>.

The letter from NHS England referring to Do Not Attempt CPR Orders that we have quoted can be downloaded here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/04/C0166-Letter-DNACPR.pdf>.

Many thanks to Three Cs for sharing the wording of their letter for us to share with our families.

For further information about being admitted to hospital please see our resource '[Going to Hospital with Covid 19](#)'.

[Your address]

Dear Paramedics/Hospital Staff/ First Responders,

COVID-19 – Assessment and triage in relation to the person in possession of this letter

The person you are assessing has a severe learning disability. Their communication, presentation and experience of symptoms may be very different from the general public. We have received guidance on helping you to understand and assess the person effectively.

Critically, we have also been asked to point out to you that the person has a learning disability and/or autism and therefore paramedics, healthcare staff or other first responders:

MUST NOT apply the Critical Frailty Scale or CFS in their triage assessment

MUST NOT issue a DNACPR order on the basis of a learning disability or Down's Syndrome diagnosis

If you do either of these, you will be in breach of professional guidance (as set out in letter from NHS England April 3rd 2020) and are likely to make the wrong decisions with potentially fatal consequences for someone who might otherwise fully recover to live a good quality life. For quick reference these are the important points of that letter:

“The CFS should not be used in younger people, people with stable long-term disabilities (for example, cerebral palsy), learning disability or autism. An individualised assessment is recommended in all cases where the CFS is not appropriate”.

“The terms “learning disability” and “Down’s syndrome” should never be a reason for issuing a DNACPR order [...]”.

I have been supported to write this letter by the Challenging Behaviour Foundation (a registered charity) who provide information and support to families of people with severe learning disabilities whose behaviour may challenge. For more information please see www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk.

Yours Faithfully,

[Your name and relationship]