

# INFORMATION SHEET

## **CBF Summary: Clinical guide for front line staff to support the management of patients with a learning disability, autism or both during the coronavirus pandemic – relevant to all clinical specialities-**

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This guidance is for all **frontline health professionals** who may come into contact with your loved one in a **hospital or healthcare setting**. The guidance sets out steps for frontline health staff to follow to ensure that this group is properly heard and treated. It includes information and resources for staff on assessment of pain and distress, communication, and information on the Mental Capacity Act. More information can be found on our Information sheets on [Routine Healthcare during Covid-19](#), [Going into Hospital with Covid-19](#), and [Covid19 Letter to Paramedics, Healthcare Staff and First Responders](#).

Key points in the guidance for frontline staff:

- **Be aware of diagnostic overshadowing.** Diagnostic overshadowing is looking to a person's disability or mental health condition to explain changes rather than looking for illness or other health problems (and in the process potentially missing health issues). The whole situation may also be very distressing, and it is important not to assume that somebody with a learning disability also has a mental illness.
- **Listen to family carers** about communication, behaviour, their loved one's wellness and medication. Use communication passports and ask parents/carers if the person has one. People with a learning disability do not automatically lack capacity.
- **Make reasonable adjustments (this is a legal requirement)** e.g. allocating a clinician by gender, taking blood samples by thumb prick rather than needle, providing a quiet space to see the patient away from excess noise and activity. And ask for specialist support if necessary.
- **Understand behaviour change-** challenging behaviour may be an indication of pain, distress, illness, or discomfort.

The full guidance can be found [here](#). We have also produced a series of Legal FAQs which address healthcare and that you may find helpful. All FAQs are available on our [Covid-19 Information and Resources page](#).

**We aim to update summaries in line with guidance which is changing regularly, this summary was last updated on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020.**