

GUIDANCE: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES AND APPOINTMENTS

ADJUSTMENTS PLEDGE ON ALL COMMUNICATIONS

Ask the person, before you start a verbal or written conversation, and also before you meet the person virtually, on-site or at their home:

‘please contact myself/(another named person) by email or phone (insert contact details) to talk about any adjustments we may be able to make for you to help you attend this appointment’

OR

‘are there any adjustments that I can make to my communication to help you?’

IDENTIFY TAILORED ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE PERSON

- **Before your first appointment, find out what the person’s preferred method of communication is** - this is often in writing, using the chat area during video meetings and they may prefer to have their video turned off. Check what communication support they have, whether they use any assistive technology to communicate and make sure it is in place as well as the support that you need to communicate in different ways.
- **Check whether the person finds it difficult to attend an in-person appointment** - can you offer a video or phone appointment if needed and seek support or training with the technology you need to support this adjustment if necessary?
- **Before the person visits you on-site or you visit their home, you should find out whether the candidate has any sensory needs that you can accommodate and whether there are any other considerations that mean they need an appointment at a particular time of day or day of the week**, for example, an appointment later in the day to avoid rush hour travel or when they have been able to take medications and are more resilient etc.

Thinking point: To achieve this, do you need sign-off from senior managers to change any processes?

PREPARING AND PROVIDING GOOD VISUAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- Help the autistic person by **sharing information in advance about what to expect from you and the appointment, including any questions** you'll be asking
- **Send photos of yourself and the room** you will meet in, to provide predictability and familiarity. See an example of an effective one-page profile here: <https://www.autentic.uk/catherine-leggett-one-page-profile>
- Consider completing any **forms that the person needs to fill in in advance or over more than one appointment** to avoid overwhelming the person.
- Many autistic people prefer visual to verbal information - **Can you produce information in pictures of what happens before, during and after the appointment or to explain your process? (see an example below)**



Before appointment:

takes approximatey
30 minutes:

please answer the
questions on the
seperate sheet I've
given you and email it
to me



Appointment :

1 hour **3rd July**

@10am-11:00am:

we will plan the work
that needs to be done
together



After appointment:

I will carry out the
work and aim to
complete it by 10th
July. I will email you to
let you know if this
changes



- With good preparation and adapting your communication, the person should feel comfortable and prepared to engage with you – **but if the person isn't verbally responsive, then give them some extra time, don't fill in brief silences (less than 5 seconds) before reframing a question**

PREPARING YOUR ENVIRONMENT FOR ON-SITE/VIRTUAL APPOINTMENTS

Think about the room or virtual environment that you will meet in. For example:

- **can you control the light or the temperature?**
- **is the room full of clutter?**
- **are you likely to be disturbed or interrupted by external noise?**
-

These have potential to impact on your interaction. You can ask the person the following questions if it will help them to feel comfortable and engage in the meeting:

- **Would you prefer the lights turned on or off?**
- **Do you need to wear sunglasses, ear defenders or use a stim toy?**
- **Would you prefer the meeting room door to be open or closed?**

Avoid booking meetings with that coincide with ***scheduled fire alarm testing***. If this cannot be avoided, warn the person, so that the noise is not unexpected and they can leave the building in good time if they need to. Minimise any distractions from:

- **phones, ring tones, vibrations and alerts**
- **people walking past**
- **people interrupting your meeting**

DURING THE APPOINTMENT

- Adopt a **friendly-neutral facial expression** & use quiet and calm gestures, **don't fidget**
- Be **consistent, with tone, volume, pitch and intonation** of voice and **don't interrupt**
- 'Match' the persons comfortable level of eye contact, **lower your gaze if necessary**
- Leave a clear **5 seconds between questions and ask one question or make one point at a time**
- **Offer limited (2 or 3) options for them to consider & provide visual supporting information e.g. video's etc to explain each choice**
- **Avoid big, open questions** such as 'what do you want to do'? be specific
- Don't sit or stand directly opposite or too close, at an angle or to the side is better
- **Use clear and literal language and don't rely on non-verbal communication**