

Treat me well



Make your child's voice heard

Reasonable adjustments for children and young people with a learning disability in hospital.

As the parent of a young person with a learning disability, you'll know how important it is for their individual needs to be recognised in all areas of life, particularly when it comes to healthcare. But sadly, many people with a learning disability, young and old, are not receiving the care they need in hospital. At Mencap, we're working tirelessly to change that with our Treat me well campaign.

We are working with healthcare professionals so that they better understand the possible needs and adjustments for people with a learning disability. And we also want you to know your rights in hospital. Because your child deserves the same quality of healthcare as anyone else.

Highlighting the issue

We recently worked with the BBC programme *Casualty* on a storyline based on a real-life case that highlighted what can happen when reasonable adjustments aren't made in hospital. It featured a young boy called Howie, who has a learning disability. He arrived with his mother at hospital in pain but wasn't given the treatment he needed because the healthcare team didn't take into consideration his individual needs and make the right adjustments. If they'd listened to his mother, who knew better than anyone else what he was trying to communicate about his pain, Howie could have recovered sooner and hospital resources would have been saved.

Your child's rights

Getting the right healthcare is the law

Did you know that all disabled people have the right to reasonable adjustments when using public services such as healthcare? This is the law under the Equality Act 2010, which exists to protect people from discrimination.

Reasonable adjustments: here's what you need to know

Reasonable adjustments are simple changes that could help people with a learning disability get better healthcare. They remove barriers and provide extra support that people with a learning disability need. Essentially, this means **better communication, more time and accessible information.**

Getting the simple changes your child needs: who to ask and when

Any member of staff you encounter in hospital is required to help with a reasonable adjustment, whether they are a porter, receptionist, nurse or doctor. So, if you think of any simple changes that might help your child during their time in hospital, don't be afraid to ask. For example, you may wish to ask the receptionist for a flexible appointment, or request that a doctor avoids language



that is complicated and not accessible. You can even phone ahead to ask for a reasonable adjustment, such as a quiet room to wait in with your child. Remember, all of these requests are a legal right.

Ten reasonable adjustments you can ask for

There are lots of reasonable adjustments that can be made for people with a learning disability in hospital. You will know better than anyone else which ones will help your child get the best possible healthcare, but here are some examples which you might find helpful.

Ask healthcare staff to...

1. Speak clearly and simply. Don't be afraid to challenge any jargon and ask them to explain what they mean. And, ask them to adapt their language for the way your child communicates.
2. Allow extra time. Even ten additional minutes can help.
3. Work closely with you, other family members or a carer on decisions about your child's care.
4. Provide a quiet space to wait or be examined. This is especially important when visiting A&E.
5. Make sure the hospital is accessible to enter and navigate. For example, ensuring there are no physical barriers.
6. Be flexible with appointment times. For example, a quieter time of the day might be better for your child.
7. Tell you whether they have a specialist learning disability liaison nurse on site, and to let that person know about your child's appointment if so.
8. Look at your **child's hospital passport** to understand their needs. If your child does not have a hospital passport, you can download a template from Mencap's website at www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/health-guides. Fill it in and remember to take it with you every time you visit the hospital.
9. Provide written information that is accessible, preferably in an easy-read format.
10. Listen to what you and your child tell them, take the time to understand their needs, and adapt the care being provided in response if necessary.

You know your child better than anyone else

Healthcare professionals are experts in what they do, but you are the expert in your own child. That's why we strongly encourage you to ask for any reasonable adjustments they may need in hospital. After all, it is your right.

We hope you have found this information useful. Find out more about the Treat me well campaign and other reasonable adjustments at www.mencap.org.uk/tmw

If you or someone you know is struggling to get the medical attention they need, please contact Mencap's Freephone Learning Disability Helpline on **0808 808 1111** (9am-3pm, Monday-Friday) or email helpline@mencap.org.uk.