

1. Be aware of diagnostic overshadowing

- People with a disability may respond or communicate their symptoms differently.
- Take care not to attribute potential symptoms to disability.
- The presentation of COVID may vary from the general population

2. Ask for and read Hospital Passports

- Read this for essential information. A Hospital Passport gives information about the person's health / medical needs, preferred method of communication and other preferences.
- Ask the person and/or their accompanying carer/ family member if they have one

3. Listen to parents/carers/ family member

- They know the person best and will advise about their normal baseline presentation and how to best support them.
- They know their current behaviour and how it may differ from usual as an indication that they are unwell and also indicate that they are improving.

4. Make reasonable adjustments

- These are adjustments that aim to remove barriers and should be made to support and enable a person receive the treatment they need, e.g. providing a quiet place away from noise, a larger room with a hoist for person with a power wheelchair, access to sign language for people with a hearing impairment.
- You can ask the person and their carer/family member what may have worked before.

5. Communication

- Try to understand the person -check with them, their carer/family and their Health Passport for the best way to achieve this.
- They may have a Communication Passport / Systems or communication board– Use it if they have.
- Use plain simple language. Speak slower. Give plenty of time for understanding and response. Avoid medical terms and jargon wherever possible.

6. Understanding behavioural responses to illness/pain/discomfort

- Articulation of pain might differ from the general population.
- Understanding what is “normal” for that person is crucial to assessment and diagnosis.
- Speak to their carer/family member about this

7. Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act/ National Consent Policy

- Everyone is assumed to have capacity to make decisions. Please make adjustments to enable decision making wherever possible.

8. Ask for specialist support and advice if necessary

Family/Carers, ID Nurses, Patient Advocate (e.g. National Advocacy Service, Inclusion Ireland) can help with issues of communication, reasonable adjustments, assessment of pain. Is the patient linked with an ID service? They maybe able to give expertise in the area.

9. Mental well-being and emotional distress

- Change in routine can be distressing for the person's emotional and mental wellbeing. Change in carers, hospital settings, PPE can all lead do more anxiety and distress.
- Do your best to work with the person to find out how to best help them regain calm and control.