

# General Advice to Support Effective Communication

**“We communicate in every part of our lives. Through communication we form and maintain relationships, we work and learn, we explore and keep in touch with the world, we understand our past and make plans for the future.**

**Communication helps us to be a person and to take part in life and all its opportunities.”**

**Communication is not just about talking** but is also about **listening**. Our **non-verbal language** is also extremely important. Remember to consider your **tone** of voice, **body language**, **eye contact** and **volume** as well as the words you are using.

## Remember:

- Speak to the individual as an adult. This will help demonstrate **respect** and ensure **dignity**.
- **Respect** – shame around poor speech is less likely to be experienced if the person feels they are well regarded by those listening.
- **Patience** - it is laborious to communicate when speech is impaired. It cannot be rushed.
- **Interest** – are you curious about what this person wishes to say?
- **Honesty** – it is not a mark of disrespect to impart when you have not understood, especially when you do this so that the person can attempt to repair the communication.
- Use your **imagination** – Be creative and use the resources around you to support communication.
- Know where and when to **ask for support**.

# Creating a Communication Friendly Environment

- Ensure the individual has their **hearing aids, glasses** etc. on if required.
- Choose a **quiet and calm space** - reduce background noise and keep distractions to a minimum.
- Ensure you are sitting **face to face** and at the same level as the individual.
- Ensure you are both **sitting comfortably** – pain and discomfort can reduce an individual's communication ability.
- Give the individual your **full attention** when talking with them.

# Support Understanding

You can change the way you communicate to make sure the person with aphasia understands you.

- Use **short, simple sentences**.
- Speak **slowly**
- **Break down instructions** into smaller steps.
- Present **one idea/topic** at a time.
- **Rephrase** the information if the person does not understand you.
- Support your speech with **gestures, facial expressions** and **body language**.
- Write **keywords**, **draw** a simple picture, or use a **diagram** to support understanding.
- Use **visual aids**, such as calendars, maps, pictures, objects, props.
- **Verify** or **check** that the person has understood you.
- **Be patient** – communication can take time. Indicate you are changing the subject by pausing briefly, gesturing towards what will be discussed, using cue cards etc.
- Use **intonation** in your voice. Intonation is the way your voice rises and falls as you speak.

# Encourage Expression

**We can make small changes to the ways that we communicate that can support others to express themselves.**

- **Accept all forms of communication** e.g. verbal, gesture, facial expression. If the individual wants to take you to show you something, go with them.
- Allow plenty of processing **time**.
- **Follow the lead** of the person you are communicating with. Go at their pace and check you have understood them e.g. the sun is in your eyes, is that right?
- **Ask closed-ended questions**. This type of question can be answered with one word or with a short, specific piece of information. Ask: “Would you like a cup of tea or coffee?” Instead of: “What would you like to drink?”
- **Use pen/paper** so that you can both write and draw
- **Photos and real objects** such as maps, newspapers and can to help support communication too.