

Figure 3: When to make an application for communication assistance

Objective grounds

There are relatively clear reasons that the participant may require assistance.

The participant:

- is a child aged 12 years and under
- has a known or suspected disability or impairment or is neurodiverse (for example, has autism, a brain injury, dyslexia, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or other condition that affects their ability to communicate)
- has a mental health condition, dementia, is experiencing mental distress, trauma induced anxiety or stress that impacts their communication
- has a recent psychiatrist's or psychologist's report, including a Fitness to Plead Report or a Mode of Evidence Report that indicates communication difficulties, intellectual disability, poor processing speed, high suggestibility or high stress
- has hearing impairment or is deaf or has a visual impairment or is blind.

Subjective grounds

The reasons for making an assistance application are less clear and require those working with the participant to recognise and respond to the flags below.

Comprehension flags

The participant:

- doesn't appear to understand questions or is confused by what is happening
- can't repeat back what is being said in their own words or follow instructions
- focuses on irrelevant small points or expresses strange ideas
- doesn't understand common everyday expressions
- is eager to please/says 'yes' quickly and frequently without seeming to understand.

Expression flags

The participant:

- gives vague, un-detailed responses to questions or is off the topic
- repeats what was said to them, or parts of what was said
- forgets or contradicts their previous accounts
- takes a long time to respond, frequently reformulates their sentences
- talks too much or not enough – uses short, simple sentences or rambles
- has no speech or limited speech or is difficult to understand
- uses signs and gestures or augmentative (low or high technology) methods to communicate.

Behavioural and sensory flags

The participant:

- does not make eye contact, appears disengaged or physically withdrawn, covers head, eyes or ears with hands or clothing, or fidgets
- gives inappropriate or unusual emotional responses such as smiling, laughing, humour or cockiness
- appears to have a short attention span, is easily distracted or restless when listening
- says they do not remember or "I don't know" a lot or repeatedly changes the subject
- is sensitive to light and noise, including background noise, lots of activity and people
- is easily frustrated, very defensive, verbally or physically aggressive or appears over-excited/exuberant.

Literacy flags

The participant:

- does not read or write well.