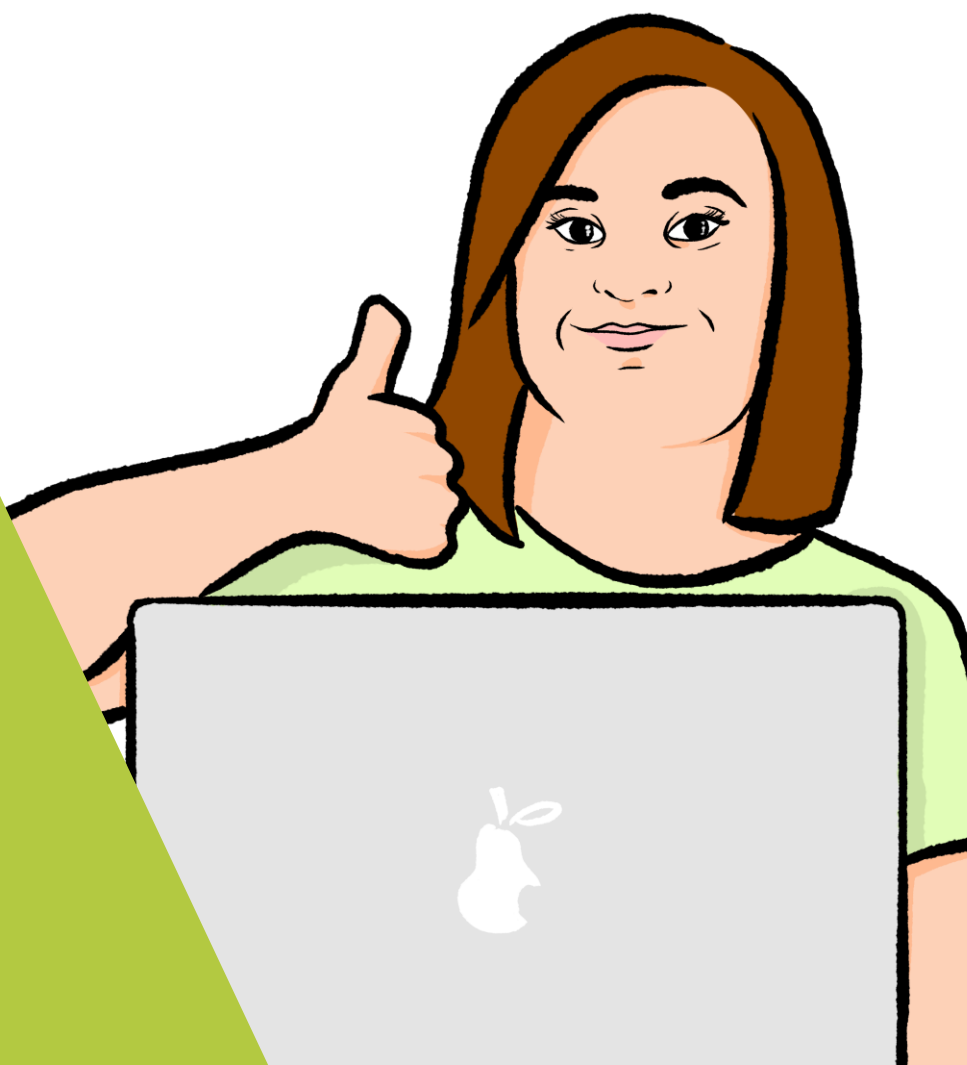




Shaping Our Lives
Inclusive Involvement Matters

Communicating with your social worker using technology



easy
read

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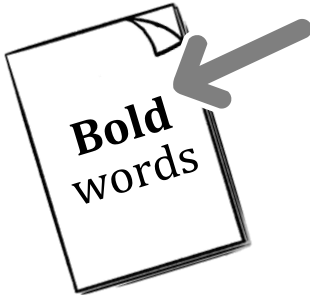
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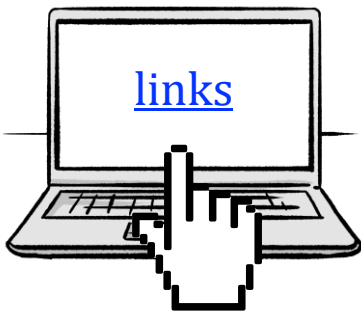
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In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after they have been used.



Some words are [blue and underlined](#). These are links which will go to another website which has more information.

Introduction



COVID-19 has meant social workers have been using more **technology** to communicate with people, instead of meeting **in person**.



Technology means things like phone calls, emails and online meetings.



In person means in the same room.



Social workers have been communicating in these ways because it was not safe to be out of the house and close to other people.

We think this will continue to happen.



This booklet gives you advice on communicating in this way .

Using technology



You can access social work services using technology in different ways, like:

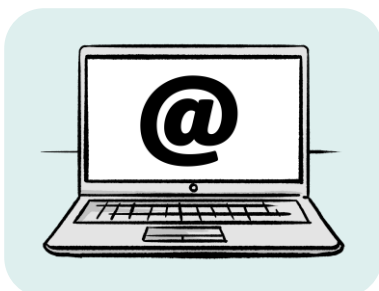
- Video calls on Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Whatsapp.



- Phone calls.

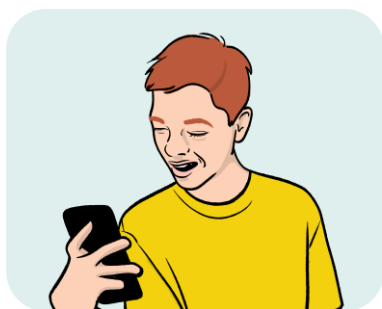


- Text or WhatsApp messages.

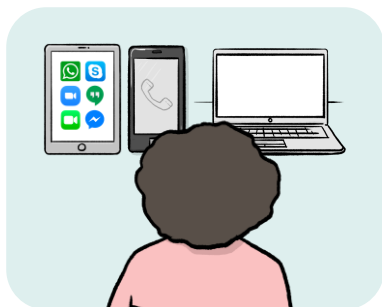


- Email.

General advice

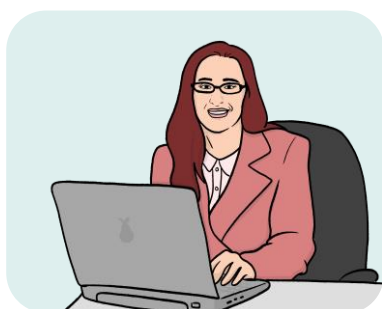


We understand that you are still getting used to using different technology.

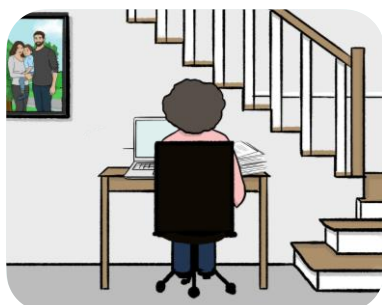


We suggest you try lots of different technology to find what is right for you.

Getting ready for meetings



You should try and get ready for your meeting with your social worker.



Here are some ways that you could get ready for your meeting, whether it is online, by phone or in-person:

- Make sure the meeting is taking place somewhere private and where you are comfortable.



- Make some notes to help you remember what you want to say.



- Ask your social worker for any information that you might need before the meeting.



- If you are having an online meeting it may help to set up your technology early so you can deal with any issues.



- If your social worker does not let you know when your meetings will be, ask them to set up dates for meetings



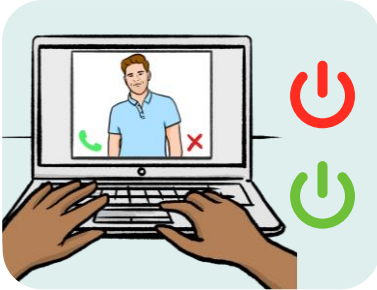
- Try to let your social worker know as early as possible if you need any changes to the meeting.



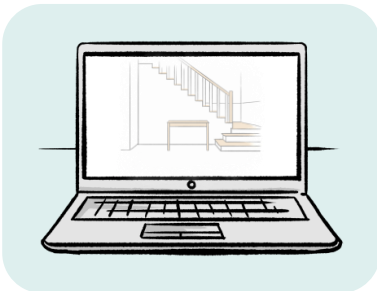
- Think about whether you might need a family member or friend to help you take part in the meeting.

Safety and privacy

Here are some ways you can stay safe during an online meeting with your social worker:



- If you are having a video call you can choose to have your camera turned off or on.



- If you choose to have your camera turned on you can hide your background on the screen.



- Try to have your meeting somewhere you will not be heard by others.



- If you are worried about how technology organisations use your information you can either ask your social worker or read the organisation's 'Privacy Notice'.



- If you are worried about how your data is being used you should visit www.ico.org.uk

Your choices



You can tell your social worker what way of communicating with them suits you best.



This could be online, by phone, by email or in-person.

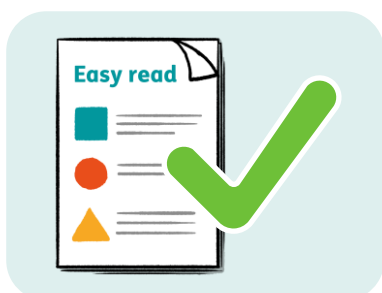
Reasonable adjustments



Reasonable adjustments are changes that places and services can make so that disabled people can take part like everybody else.



If you have a disability you have the right to ask for reasonable adjustments so you can access services.



Some reasonable adjustments that you could ask for include:

- Any information you need must be sent to you in a way that you can understand, such as Easy Read.



- Recording the meeting.



- Having an in person meeting.



You can ask for a reasonable adjustment by:

- Writing a letter or email.



- Making a phone call or asking in person.



- Asking through a support worker or interpreter.

If you are asking for a reasonable adjustment you should:



- Think about what is stopping you from being able to access the service.



- Try to ask for the reasonable adjustment you need in a clear way and explain how it will meet your needs.

In person meetings

Some things to think about are:



- Whether an in person meeting is the only way you could speak with your social worker.



- Where the in person meeting will take place.



- How you and your social worker will stay safe from COVID-19 in an in person meeting.

If your needs aren't being met



These are the steps you should take if you are having problems with your social worker:



1. Talk with them first to see if you can work your problem out together.



2. If you feel this has not helped you could talk to your social worker's manager.



3. If your problem still has not been solved, you can make a **complaint**.

A **complaint** is when you tell a person or organisation that you are not happy with what they have done.

Every organisation will have their own way of how you can make a complaint.



4. If you are still unhappy after your complaint has been dealt with or your complaint is ignored, you can speak to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

They will have a look at what has happened and decide how to solve the problem.

Advocates



Advocates are professional people who can speak up for you if you feel your needs are not being met.

There are:

- Independent advocates - these are separate from your local council and can help you with different issues.

You can ask for an independent advocate yourself.



- Specialist advocates - the staff in charge of your care could put you in touch with one of these if you are entitled to one.

Specialist advocates

There are 3 types of specialist advocate:



1. A Care Act advocate will help you understand your care rights.

Your local council should give you a Care Act advocate if you find it very difficult to take part in your own care.



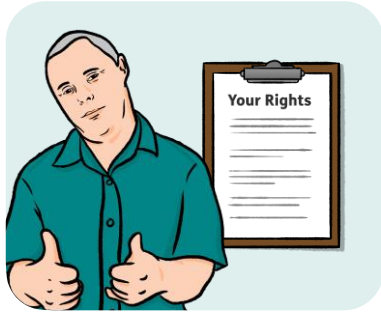
2. A Mental Capacity advocate will help you if you are not able to make important decisions about your care. You should have a Mental Capacity advocate if:



- You are not able to understand information that will help you make a decision.



- You are not able to communicate your decision to others.



3. A Mental Health Act advocate will help you understand your mental health rights.



Mental health staff will tell you if you can and should get a Mental Health advocate.

Recording meetings



If you would like to have your online meeting with your social worker recorded:

- You should let your social worker know in plenty of time.



- You could let your social worker know why you want to record the meeting, but you do not have to.



- Make sure whatever technology you are using to record is working properly.



If your social worker would like to have your online meeting recorded:

- They should tell you and you can let them know if you are not comfortable with it.



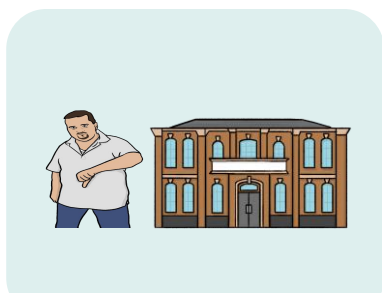
- You can ask for information about why they would like to record it.
- There are rules they have to follow about how your recording should be kept and used. You can read these rules if you ask for them.

Support with using technology



You can get lots of support with learning how to use different technology.

You may not have everything in your local area but here are some suggestions of where you can get support:



- Local libraries and colleges.



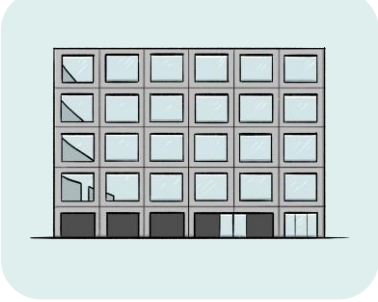
- Ask your doctor's surgery about finding you local support.



- Deaf and Disabled-led organisations (DPPOs) may be able to provide you with technology equipment and support.



- Charities who raise money for your disability.



- Companies that made the technology.



You may also be able to get some help with paying for new technology. You could get this help through:

- Disabled Students Allowance - this service is for university students who are disabled.



- Turn2Us - a charity that helps people with money problems.



- Disability **Grants** and Grants for Carers.

Grants are money given by the government to help and support organisations.



- Your local council.

Understanding your social worker



Social workers are trying to think about everyone's needs while also thinking about being safe from COVID-19.



Some organisations have rules that limit the technology their social workers can use.



Most social workers have a phone number and this is usually the easiest way to contact them.



Remember that social workers want to help and are doing the best work they can.

This Easy Read information has been produced by easy-read-online.co.uk

This booklet is based on findings from a research study funded by NIHR SSCR. The title of the study was “Improving experiences regarding the use of digital communication technologies in interactions between Disabled service users and social workers in adult services: a qualitative service user conducted enquiry to inform best practice”

The views expressed in this Guide are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

Copies of this document in a variety of formats, and other study outputs are available at: <https://shapingourlives.org.uk/report/digital-communication-technology-in-social-work/>.

If you would like to give us feedback on this document, please email hello@shapingourlives.org.uk.

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