

Keeping in Touch in Difficult Times

We've designed this Help Sheet in response to hearing concerns about blanket bans that prevent people keeping in contact with their friends and families. These restrictions have a big impact on a person's mental health and well-being. Especially now, when visits have stopped and many people are no longer allowed out.

There are different ways that people can be supported to keep in touch with loved ones. We share these below with examples we have heard about. Some hospitals are taking a positive and individual approach to risk. More need to do so. It is important to think about the different ways we can support people and their families in these difficult times.

It's also important to remember that the Human Rights Act is still very much in force. Article 8 is the right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence: which includes email, letters and other ways of keeping in touch. Legislation means that health and care workers have a duty to respect that right, protect that right and fulfil that right for people, whether someone is in hospital or living at home. We hope that this guide helps you do that.

Yes, we have internet!

Send an Email

Some wards are buying ipads or other tablets so help support people have regular contact with their families. Is this possible? Or could people be supported to purchase their own? Emails can share words, photos and pictures. What's most meaningful for the person you're working with?



TouchNote

Touch Note can be used to send personalised photo cards and meaningful messages straight from your phone or tablet. Simply download the TouchNote App. Upload favorite photos and send cards straight from a phone. For more information see: <https://touchnote.com/us/>



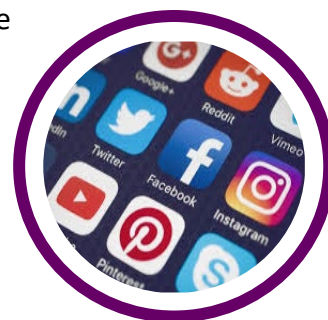
WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a free messaging service that uses the internet or data. It can be downloaded and used to video call, send messages, or short voice recordings – great for people who like to text as well as people who prefer spoken word or videos. It's possible to set up WhatsApp groups with friends and family to share photos and news together.



Social Media & Messaging Apps

Social media isn't right for everyone but is be a great way for some people to stay connected. All decisions about access to online platforms should be made on an individual basis. What's right for the person you're working with?



Video Calls

There are many ways to video call: Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Facebook Video, FaceTime; just to name a few. Being able to see someone's face while talking to them can make communication easier. Again, it's probably best to check with the person and their friends and family about which programme works best for them. New to this? YouTube is a great place to find help on using the different systems.

Video calling can also be used by staff teams to connect with colleagues and families. We have heard of an MDT using videocalls as part of their ward round to engage families and professionals who aren't part of the hospital team.



Send a Video

Sending a video can also be a brilliant way to stay connected. Some people find this much easier than live chat or video calling. It's more predictable and can be reviewed before sharing. Record a video on your smart phone or tablet and send to family or friends.



No internet connection? No problem!

Phone call

Could people be supported to have their own phones to send texts and make calls? It's possible to buy phones that can't access the internet if needed. Remember, all decisions should be least restrictive and made on an individual basis.



Write a Letter

We don't always need to rely on technology to keep connected and communicate. This is especially good if people prefer not to use the phone or if family members have limited availability. Don't be limited by words - get creative and send a drawing, painting, photo or greetings card.



Texting

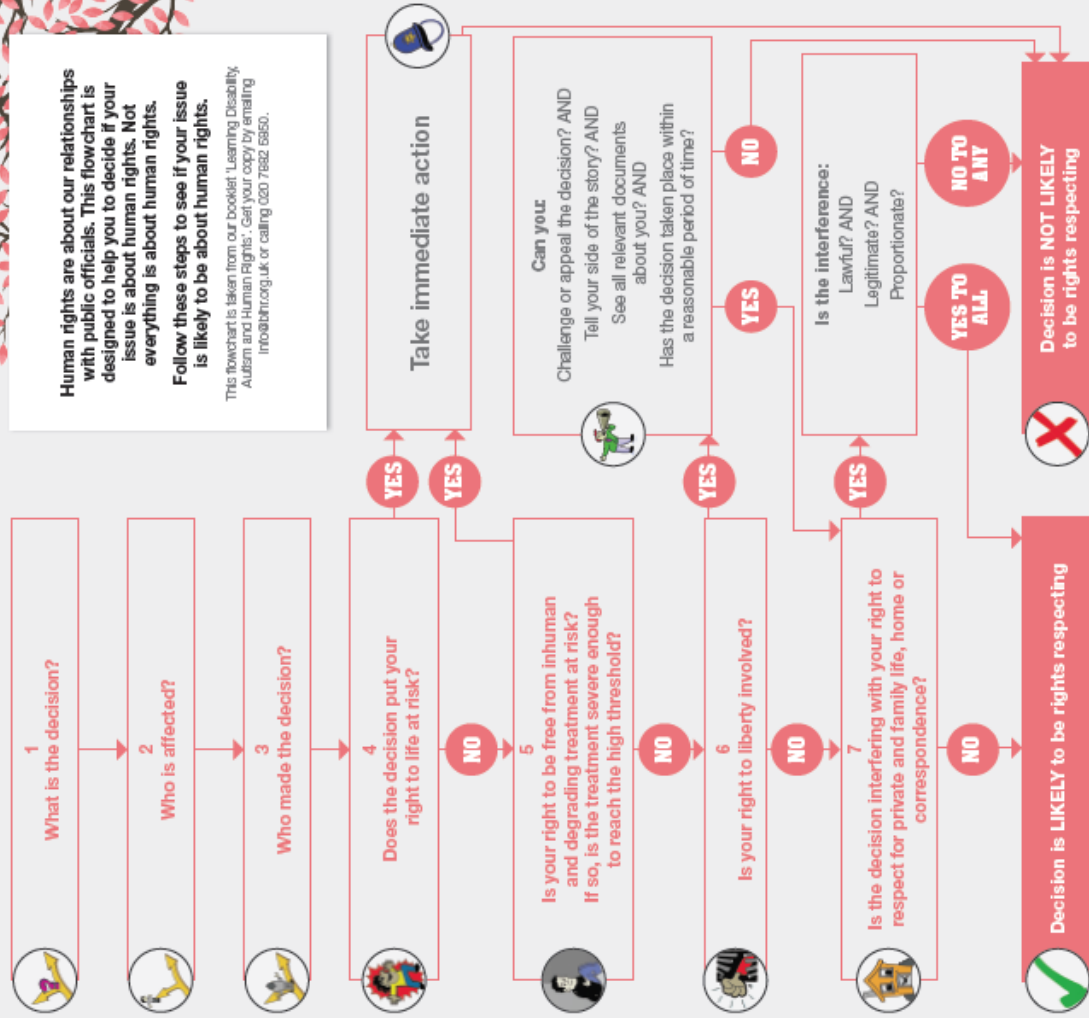
Many people prefer sending texts to speaking on the phone. Are people supported to communicate in this way if it works best for them?



The document on the following page from the British Institute of Human Rights is a great tool to support individual decision making that's in line with the Human Rights Act. Let's support a least restrictive approach that enables people to maintain their right to family life, home life and correspondence.

For more information please see: www.bihar.org.uk/

Using human rights: is my issue about human rights?



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What to do if your issue is about human rights...

Human rights are about our relationships with public officials. This flowchart is designed to help you to know what to do if you have a human rights issue and how to get it resolved. Human rights is not only about the law and courts. In fact, this flowchart shows they are a last resort.

Follow these steps to get suggestions about what to do if you have a human rights issue so that it can be resolved.

This flowchart is taken from the booklet 'Learning Disability, Autism and Human Rights'. Get your copy by emailing info@bhr.org.uk or calling 020 7882 6950.



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