

Handout 6:

Supporting people through mental health assessments

- ▶ Try to explain to the person beforehand what will be happening, when it will take place, who will be there and the types of things that might be asked. Try to make the assessment as predictable as possible. In some cases this might make the person more anxious, but you as the staff member will know best about this.
- ▶ If an appointment (at the clinic etc) is not appropriate, because of the person's anxiety or behaviour, then ask for a home appointment.
- ▶ If the assessment is to be held in a place the person is not familiar with, then perhaps they could visit beforehand.
- ▶ Inform the mental health professional of any special needs the person may have, including communication, vision, hearing and physical accessibility.
- ▶ Ask the mental health professional if they have any accessible information on their service and what they do.
- ▶ If the person or you have a lot to discuss, book a longer appointment.
- ▶ If the person is easily distracted, you might want to book a longer appointment or have the assessment over two or three sessions.
- ▶ Occasionally, professionals may ask questions of the support worker and not the person themselves (although this has got a lot better). Support staff should do their best to help the person communicate their thoughts and feelings to the professional.
- ▶ Someone who knows the person well should be with them in assessments. Bank, agency or new staff should not attend.