

Progressive neurological conditions and communication

There are a number of conditions that affect the brain and which impact on a person's communication.

These include multiple sclerosis (MS), motor neurone disease (MND), Parkinson's and progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP). The effects of each of these on communication is very different, although they do have some features in common. The effects may be different at different times of the day and will change over time.

This brief factsheet highlights the key communication concerns of people who have Parkinson's. It identifies general practical action you can take to remove barriers to participation that people with Parkinson's may face. It is based on information obtained from Parkinson's UK.

Information on other conditions can be obtained from the relevant organisations listed in the Talk for Scotland toolkit.

Parkinson's and communication

People with Parkinson's are primarily affected by slowness of movement, tremor and muscle stiffness.

As a result, their speech can become slurred and/or their voice can sound hoarse, trembling or very quiet. It can become difficult for them to write. Some people will find it hard to smile or use other facial expressions.

Key actions

People with Parkinson's will find it easier to engage if you make sure:

- meeting times and telephone conversations are arranged at a time to suit them
- they can choose to meet one-to-one rather than in a group, if they prefer
- meetings are structured to give everyone enough time to answer and to make sure quiet voices are noticed and heard
- someone is available to write to dictation if anything needs to be written down or there are forms to complete (such as an evaluation form)
- you are patient and understanding.

Further information:

Parkinson's UK (www.parkinsons.org.uk)