

## Stroke and communication

This brief factsheet highlights some of the impacts a stroke may have on communication. It identifies general practical action you can take to remove barriers to participation that people who have had a stroke may face

Muscle weakness can mean a person's speech is not clear to the listener, although they know exactly what they want to say. Do not assume that this individual cannot understand what **you** say.

About a quarter of people who have a stroke have aphasia. Someone with aphasia will have difficulty with one or more of the following:

- listening and concentrating, especially when the person is tired
- understanding what is said
- understanding written words e.g. signs on doors, appointment letters
- speaking and conveying their message
- writing
- using numbers and money, especially when under pressure e.g. on a bus, at a check-out.

### **The impact of aphasia differs greatly between individuals.**

One person may be able to understand but not be able to express themselves fluently. Another person may be able to express themselves but not understand. Often individuals will experience difficulty with both.

It can be harder if the person is tired, unwell or under pressure.

### **Key actions**

To assist someone with aphasia to **understand** you should:

- ask them what helps them to understand
- allow more time for the person to take in what is said and written
- use clear, simple, spoken and written information
- emphasise what you are saying using gestures and facial expressions
- make sure the person knows when the topic is changing.

To assist someone with aphasia to **express** themselves you should:

- ask them what helps them to understand
- give the person more time to respond in whatever way they can. For example:
  - pointing
  - using facial expression
  - nodding/shaking their head
  - using gesture (mime)
  - using pictures
  - saying part of the word
  - writing part of the word
- use and encourage the use of alternative ways of supporting the conversation. For example have paper and pencil to write down important (key) words
- summarise the conversation as you are going along.

**Further information:**

Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland [www.chss.org.uk](http://www.chss.org.uk)

Speakability [www.speakability.org.uk](http://www.speakability.org.uk)