

How to use visual aids



What are visual aids?

'Visual aids' are resources which use drawings, diagrams, lists, mind maps or any other visual representation to simplify, explain or share information in a more accessible or engaging way.

Often developed and used by intermediaries, these resources can be used for an almost endless list of purposes during legal proceedings, including explaining:

- The trial or hearing process, the positions of different parties in care proceedings, or a defendant's likely sentence
- Complex concepts like 'threshold', 'joint enterprise', or a 'pool of perpetrators'

Which clients should I use visual aids with?

Visual aids can be used to assist any court user with a preference for visual learning. They may prove particularly helpful for clients with a learning disability, and autistic clients.

No two court users with a communication difficulty or difference are the same. While some people will find visual aids very helpful, others will not. An [intermediary assessment](#) will explore whether visual aids are likely to assist your client and can make specific recommendations about their use.

Visual aid types

If you have never used visual aids before, it can be difficult to know where to start. It can be helpful to think about the different types of visual aids and the different situations they can be used in:

Pie charts

This simple visual tool can be a helpful way to explain concepts like joint enterprise or when discussing topics like parental responsibility.

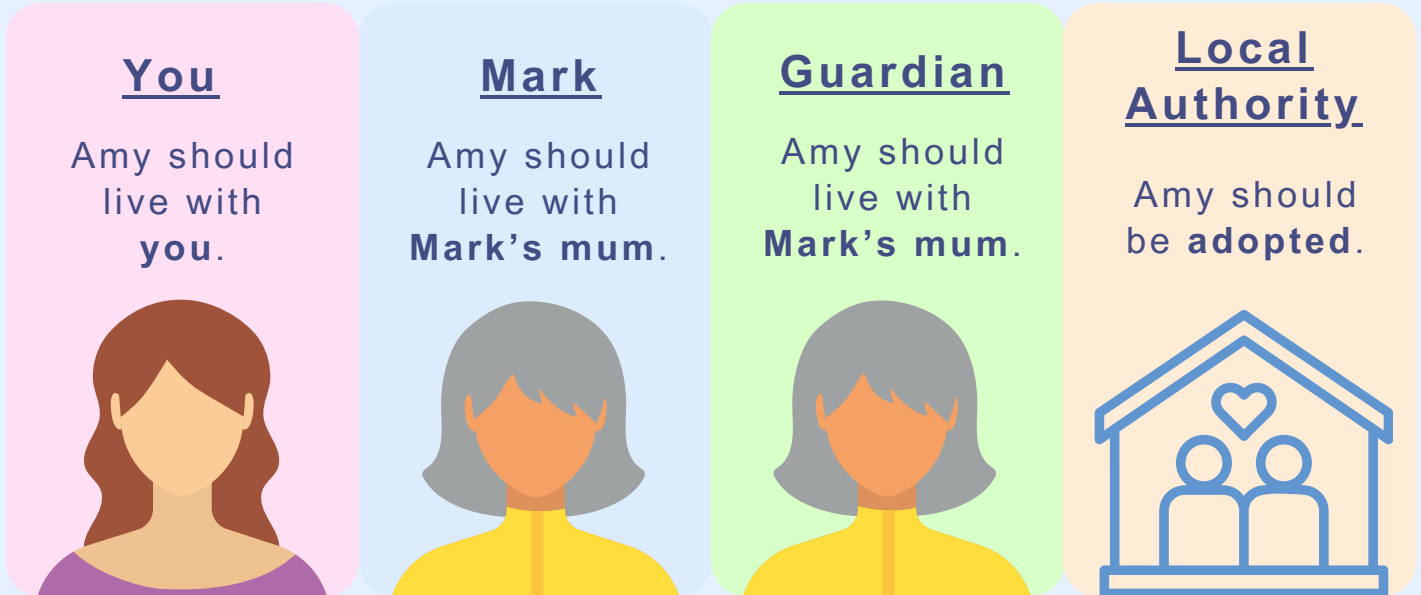
Who makes decisions about Amy's life?



Lists

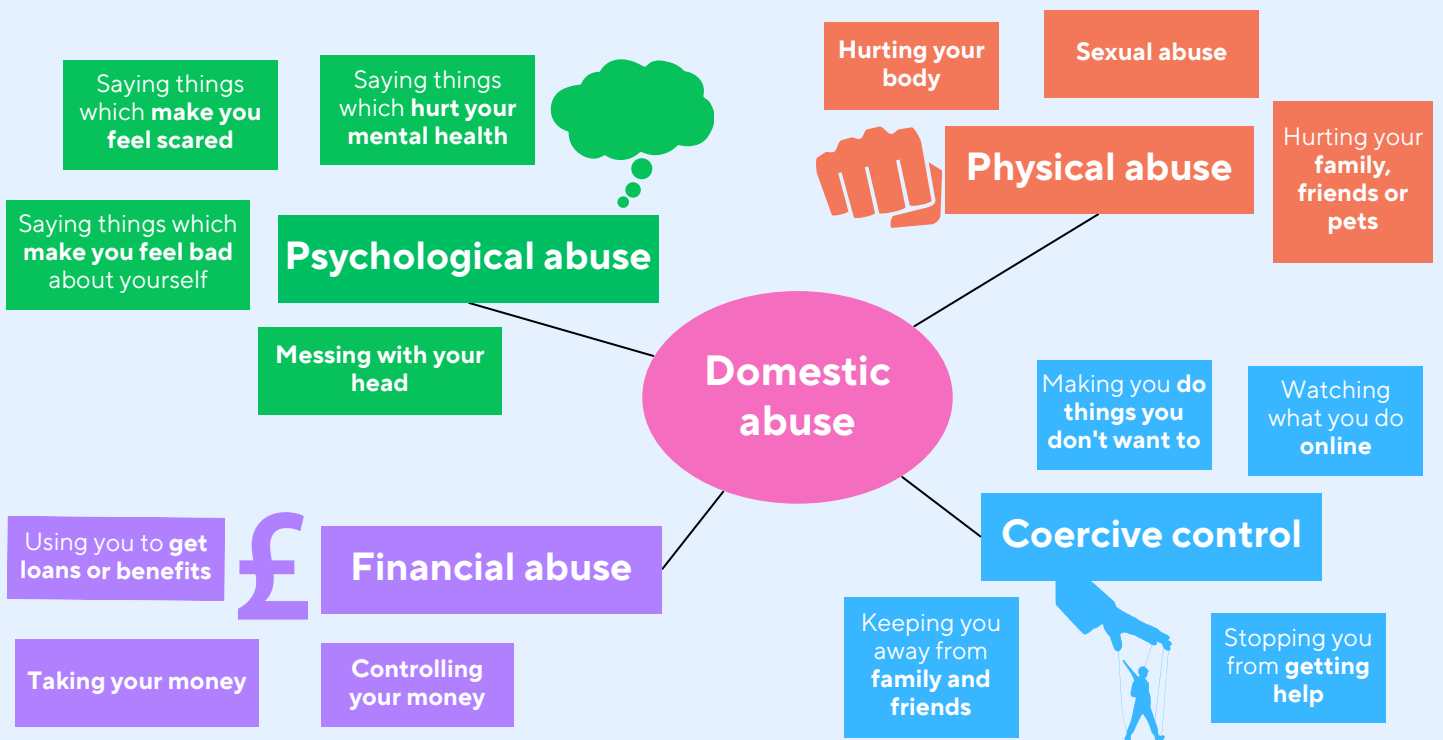
Simple lists with visual icons can help some clients with tasks like decision making and understanding 'the bigger picture'. Lists and tables can be used to consolidate 'who wants what' in care proceedings or to weigh up the pros and cons of giving evidence in criminal trial.

Who wants what?



Mind maps

These visual aids are particularly good for exploring or 'unpacking' a complex or abstract topic. They can be used interactively with some clients, which can improve attention and engagement in some cases. For example, you could ask your client to add things from their own experience to the mind map, or ask them to help you draw out the resource.



Diagrams

This type of visual aid can help make complex or abstract concepts more concrete and clear. For example, when explaining the concept of threshold, or the difference between consecutive and concurrent sentences.

Concurrent = all at the same time

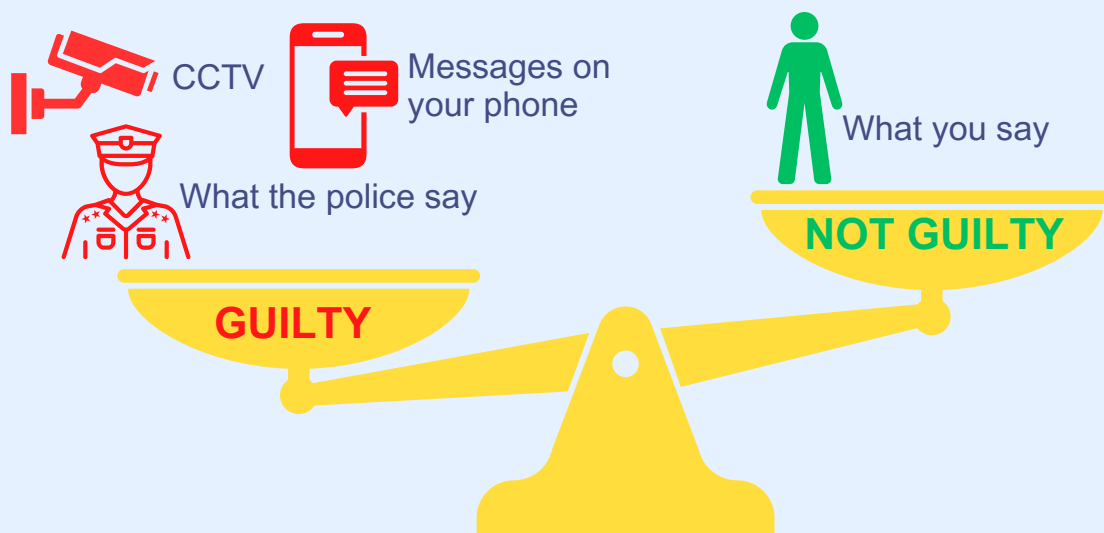


Consecutive = one after another



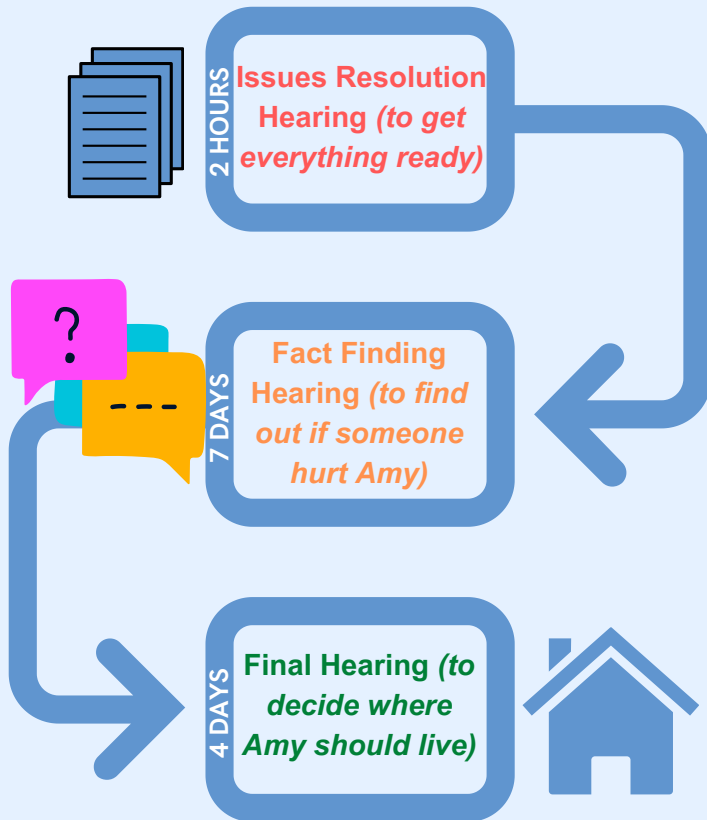
There are many different types of diagrams which can be helpful in legal proceedings. For example, 'balancing scales' diagrams can assist decision making. 'Comic strip' style event sequences can help your client consider the thoughts and views of others in their case, by asking them to add to the thought and speech bubbles of each 'character'.

What will the jury think?



Flow charts

Simple box and arrow flowcharts are a helpful tool for explaining processes. For example, how each hearing will lead onto the next, the criminal trial process, or the appeals process.



Further reading

- Pereira, T., & Aldridge, M. (2023). [Low technology communication aids used in intermediary mediated police investigative interviews with vulnerable witnesses with an intellectual disability](#). *The International Journal of Evidence & Proof*, 27(1), 83-104.

From The Access Brief

- [Learning Disability in legal proceedings](#)
- [How to create easy read documents](#)
- [How can an intermediary assist at trial?](#)

Intermediary services

If you are concerned about your client's ability to communicate effectively and participate in legal proceedings, Communicourt can help.

We will assess your client to understand their communication needs and how these might affect them in court. Your client does not need to have a diagnosis. Our reports will identify any particular communication issues and make bespoke recommendations to help you and your client throughout proceedings.

If intermediary assistance is recommended, one of our highly trained intermediaries can be there throughout proceedings to facilitate those recommendations.

Intermediaries are mostly funded by HMCTS, with no charges or payments required by legal representatives.

How to book an intermediary

- 1 Refer online.** Refer your client for an assessment through [our online portal](#) (5 minutes).
- 2 Funding.** We send a quote for you to send to Legal Aid / HMCTS to approve (24 hours).
- 3 Book assessment.** Once funding is approved, please let us know. We will schedule an assessment (2-6 weeks).
- 4 Assessment will take up to 3 hours** and can be conducted in person or remotely. You will then receive a report (7 days).
- 5 Book dates** for hearings or conferences. We will send you booking forms to be signed by the court. Once signed, we will book the intermediary.