

# Identifying communication needs



## DOES MY CLIENT NEED AN INTERMEDIARY?

It can be challenging for legal professionals to know when an intermediary assessment is required for their client. In some cases, mental health, engagement and other factors can complicate the picture. In other instances, a client may have a diagnosis which can affect communication but may feel this condition is well managed.

The truth is that there is no exact 'checklist' or rule of thumb which can be applied when you suspect your client could have a communication difficulty. This is why [intermediary assessments](#) can be very helpful. By exploring all key communication domains, these assessments will identify areas of relative strength and difficulty, providing a clear communication profile for your client.

If you are not sure whether to request an intermediary assessment, it may be helpful to consider the following points.

## COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTY INDICATORS

Although there is no 'one size fits all' guide to identifying communication needs, the following presentations may indicate that your client requires intermediary assessment:

- **They often agree when asked if they understand** but cannot explain information back to you when asked to do so. They frequently misunderstand or forget information.
- **They struggle to maintain attention**, often losing focus, becoming fidgety, physically restless or easily distracted.
- **They regularly digress from the topic** of conversation to discuss unrelated subjects.
- **They often give "yes", "no" or non-verbal answers** which do not demonstrate clear understanding of (or engagement with) the conversation.

## THE ROLE OF DIAGNOSIS

It is important to be aware that a client who reports a diagnosis of a learning disability, a learning difficulty, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism, stroke, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), schizophrenia, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety or other condition *may* have communication needs.

However, in some cases, individuals with formal diagnoses may not have communication needs which require intermediary assistance. For example, they may use medication or have learned strategies to effectively overcome communication difficulties.

It may assist to consider the following points:

- A client with a communication-related diagnosis may have learned **masking strategies**. Their difficulties may be more marked than they appear.
- **Asking your client** how their diagnosis affects them in their everyday life may offer some insight.
- Asking your client about their experiences in conferences and court hearings may also help inform this decision.
- **Remember** that your client may not feel comfortable discussing their diagnosis, symptoms or communication difficulties, or may lack insight into their needs.
- A client who **does not have diagnoses** may also have communication difficulties.
- If you are uncertain about a client's communication needs, an [intermediary assessment](#) can provide detailed information about their communication profile.

Communicourt is the largest Managed and Approved Service Provider of intermediaries for defendants and respondents, in criminal and family courts. We passionately believe that everyone has a right to a fair trial.

**Communicourt**  
communication matters in the courts

## How we can help you



### REQUESTING AN INTERMEDIARY ASSESSMENT

If you think your client may have a communication difficulty, intermediary support is fully funded. Communicourt assessments are simple to arrange using the process outlined below.

An intermediary assessment can provide professionals and the court with more insight into your client's communication strengths and difficulties, and how these may impact them during proceedings.

We produce comprehensive communication reports which identify issues and make detailed recommendations to help you and your client, even in cases where an intermediary is not recommended.

If an intermediary is recommended, one of our highly trained intermediaries can attend conferences (subject to funding) and hearings to facilitate those recommendations, meaning you can focus on your job.

Our experience means we can recommend solutions that make a tangible difference and support the justice system in getting a fair result.



### HOW TO GET SUPPORT



#### BOOK ONLINE

Refer your client for an assessment through our online booking system [communicourt.co.uk](https://www.communicourt.co.uk)

5 minutes

#### FUNDING

We will send you a quote that you need to send to HMCTS and Legal Aid for them to approve funding

24 Hours

#### BOOK THE ASSESSMENT

Once you have funding in place, please let us know. We will then arrange an assessment

4-6 weeks

#### ASSESSMENT

The 3 hour assessment can be carried out in person or remotely. You will then receive a report

7 days

#### BOOK COURT DATES

We will send booking forms which must be signed by the court. Once received we will then book your intermediary

Throughout the trial