

# What is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is the term used to describe difficulty with swallowing.

Swallowing difficulties are more common in people with learning disabilities. If it is not managed safely it can lead to chest infections and choking. Dysphagia is often a cause of premature death in people with a learning disability

## Referrals

Referrals are accepted by the service user, carers and family, GP, and other professionals.

Often the referrer will have noticed a difficulty when eating or coughing with meals and drinks or a history of unexplained chest infections.

A telephone triage will be completed within 2 days of receiving the referral. This will determine if the individual needs to be seen within 5 or 10 working days

This will also help us decide which professionals need to begin the assessment.

## Assessment

**The Dysphagia Service is run by the therapy team. The team consists of Speech & Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy.**

The Therapist will observe the service user eating and drinking. This observation will usually take place at a mealtime at either the individual's home or day centre.

**Speech and Language Therapists** support individuals to ensure eating and drinking is safe and enjoyable, and will provide guidelines which take into account the individual's preference and quality of life.

**Physiotherapists** will advise on respiratory management, positioning and posture.

**Occupational Therapists** will assess the use of equipment to support an individual's eating and drinking.



## Treatment

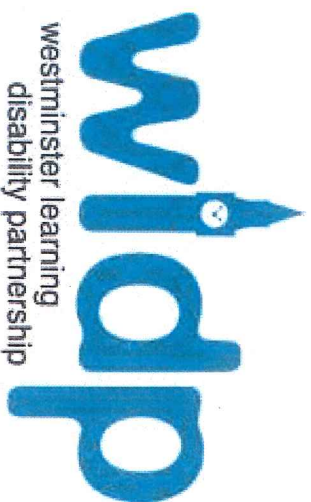
The Therapists can:

- Explain why swallowing is difficult
- Provide guidelines on the safest and easiest textures to eat and drink
- Introduce strategies to increase confidence and reduce fear of choking. Provide training for family and carers supporting the individual
- Review guidelines and make changes as needed
- Provide equipment
- Advise on seating and posture
- Help to maintain independence with eating and drinking
- Refer on to other agencies such as dietetics or oral health
- Discuss with the GP for further specialist assessment
- Provide training on eating and drinking and dysphagia

## Contact Us

If you have any concerns about  
someone's eating and drinking  
please call us on:

Telephone: 0207 641 7411



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## Learning Disability Dysphagia Service Eating and Drinking

