Guiding and Communicating with Deafblind people

This video will provide you with some strategies on how to guide and communicate with a person who is Deafblind.

There are a variety of hearing and sight abilities and combinations, please ensure you adjust to the person’s preferred modes.

When you approach a person who is completely Deaf and blind, a soft, gentle touch is enough to get their attention. Place their hand on the inside of your elbow and walk with care. They may reach out to check who you are. You may guide their hand to your insignia, or write on the palm of their hand with your pointer finger in capital letters.

When a person who is Deafblind is required to enter a vehicle, care must be taken to ensure the person’s safety. Guide left hand to the door handle, and their right hand to the top corner of the door. Gently touch the top of their head so they do not hit their head on the car. They may require assistance with the seatbelt.

If you are guiding a person who is Deafblind up or down the stairs, ensure that their hand is on the banister. The banister will provide balance support. If there are no banisters, be vigilant as people who are Deafblind are prone to bad balance. Their other hand is tucked in your elbow. Take one step at a time, and ensure that their feet are flat on the step before moving forward.

Whenever a person who is Deafblind is in a new environment, time must be taken to acquaint them with their surroundings. Guide their hand towards the items in the environment, such as the table, and chair. For items such as a cup of water, gently grab their wrist, and move it to the cup, they then will know where is it placed for their use.

A person who is completely Deafblind may already have their own resources such as a communication book to assist with everyday communication. A thumbs up or ‘OK’ written on their palm assures them that you have received their request or information. Pen and paper can work if they are able to write messages back to you. Remember that they may not be able to see or hear adequately to read or hear your response. Your communication with them may need to be via touch.

For further assistance with complex communication tasks, interpreters can be called and the deafblind person may also have an allocated support worker. When you book an interpreter, mention how many Deaf and Deafblind people you have in your care, as this will inform the booking agency about the number of personnel required.