An epileptic fit as an example of an unexpected event

What will you do to assist a person who has an epileptic fit?

Hopefully, you will have read their personal profile or support plan including a guide for the warning signs of a possible fit and what you need to do to care for them according to the length of the fit. If it goes for more than three minutes, you may need to call an ambulance and notify the person's emergency contact.

What are the warning signs? It depends on the person. Some people seem emotional, or unusually overactive. Others may seem uncharacteristically slowed down. Their family may have warned you that a fit is imminent, in which case you know that you need to stay extra close to the person, and be prepared to brace yourself to catch them if they begin to fall.

You may anticipate the collapsing of a person with epilepsy from a sound or movement the person makes - possibly only seconds before they begin to have a fit. Seconds are enough time for your reflex action to click in for you to position yourself to safely stop the person from getting injured in a heavy fall. Seconds are enough for you to brace yourself so that you do not injure yourself as you take the person's weight to lower them to the floor.

What if this is the first time you have met Adam? What if you are a casual worker, called in to cover for Adam's regular support person? Adam is impatient for you to take him to a card game at the local community centre. Nobody has given you a copy of his Support Plan for Adam. His father is impatient to get to work, and as soon as he has verified your identity, and given you the address of the community centre, he tells you that your job is to support Adam to access public transport to get to the centre, stay there with him to help him socialise and then escort him home.

You must make sure that at the very least you have Adam’s father’s telephone number.

While you are on the bus, you might call the agency to ask them to advise you about Adam's support needs. Getting the information necessary to support a vulnerable person is part of your duty of care. If you can’t get the information you need, you must rely on your eyes and ears and on your skills from first aid training – if needed