

Annual Health Checks for patients with a learning disability

Points for practices to consider and discuss

How do you schedule health checks throughout the week, month or year? Is the current process meeting the needs of the practice and the patients?

This will greatly depend on the size of the practice LD register. Practices with larger registers may wish to schedule appointments throughout the year, whereas those with smaller registers may select a couple of months to undertake all checks. Consideration needs to be given for 'mopping up' any DNAs.

Who is undertaking the health checks?

This will differ from practice to practice depending on experience, skill and interest. Some practices may have an entirely GP-led model whereas others will upskill their HCAs or nurses to undertake the check. Whichever model is used, it is important to ensure all relevant clinicians are trained and confident to undertake an annual health check as this will greatly support practices when staff are not available.

Have the right people in your practice received training in learning disabilities and making reasonable adjustments?

Making reasonable adjustments is everyone's responsibility. It is recommended that practices liaise with their NSFT LD primary care liaison nurse who can support with this. There is also e-learning available via Bluestream (see CCG website).

Are you making reasonable adjustments?

Practices need to ensure that any identified reasonable adjustments need to be actioned and the patient's record updated. Each patient on the register needs to be considered and all staff need to be made aware, particularly those who are inviting patients in for their health check.

All practices should have access to an Accessible Information Standard template where they can record any adjustments. It should then pop up on the patient home screen and it's also included at the bottom of any letters that are generated in DXS

How often are you reviewing your LD register?

Practices should actively review their LD register annually. The Local Authority sends their register to the primary care LD liaison nurses. The nurses review these for each practice, removing those who are not appropriate (such as having a learning difficulty

Someone with a learning disability is diagnosed in childhood. Some of the diagnosis codes are therefore outdated and this is something to be aware of.

Are you giving enough time for the health check appointment?

The RCGP* states:

Allow an hour for the health check as you will need to go at the person's pace.

It is important to recognise that nurses and doctors have different skills in assessing patients with a learning disability. Whilst either profession can complete the full examination we recommend the nurse carries out the check of the weight, height, urine analysis and completes the checklist up to the physical examination and then passes the person over to the GP. The GP then reviews the symptoms, performs the physical examination, reviews the medication and completes a written health action plan.

*The combination of providing a multidisciplinary health care assessment will maximise the quality and the health outcomes for the person with LD. Some patients with learning disabilities may find dealing with two different professionals creates more anxiety, so a **flexible approach is recommended depending on the needs of the patient.***

The health check is ideally split into two half an hour appointments, which are sequentially arranged with the practice nurse and then the patient's usual GP.

How are you engaging with your Learning Disability population?

Consider:

- *Gathering feedback from patients and carers*
- *Follow up with those who DNA and their carers*
- *Involve families and carers – do they understand the annual health check and why it is important?*

Are you engaging with NSFT Learning Disability Primary Care Liaison Nurses?

Each practice is aligned to a nurse. The nurses are available to support practices with their register (ensuring the right people are on there), supporting practice staff to improve the quality of the annual health check, offering advice and guidance, and training where necessary.

You can contact the team on liaison.nursesld@nsft.nhs.uk

*<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/resources/toolkits/-/media/70BEBFAD2E5B450F9E94D2F9C6E604B7.ashx>