

Letter to GPs on the learning disability register and annual health checks

	I am Wes Streeting MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.
	I am Ismail Kaji, Mencap's Parliamentary and Government Engagement Officer. I have lived experience of learning disability and living with health conditions.
	We are writing this easy read letter together to help work on tackling health inequalities that effect people with a learning disability.
	Easy Read is always useful when it comes to clear communication so it's inclusive and everyone understands.
	This information is for all Health staff working in the GP Surgery. Not just doctors and nurses.

	Annual health checks and health action plans are an important for the health of people with a learning disability.
	Evidence from the Learning from Lives and Deaths Review (LeDeR) shows that health checks lower health inequalities for people with a learning disability. https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/assets/fans-dept/leder-2022-easy-read-report-final.pdf
	People with a learning disability die up to 19.5 years younger than the general population.
	We know health checks for people who live with conditions like epilepsy or diabetes are very important.
	Providing annual health checks can help people with a learning disability have access to additional support such as vaccination and immunisation or cancer screening.
	Giving people with a learning disability accessible information, like this letter, and reasonable

	adjustments to meet their needs, will help to find health problems as early as possible.
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	Around 3 in 4 people with a learning disability are missing from GP learning disability registers.
	Those missing are likely to be people with a mild learning disability and people from Black and Asian backgrounds
	A person does not need to have a special assessment or test to be on the learning disability register.
	Some people might talk about having a learning difficulty. You might need use your judgement here. Everyone has a part to play in being aware of the register and looking at who should be on it
	What a good health check looks like

	It's best when the check is done in the surgery with a doctor or nurse that knows the person well. This means that the patient with a learning disability is more relaxed.
	This allows for the doctor or nurse to see the person and look at their body and they can ask questions about how the person is doing.
  	For people who have mobility issues and find moving around challenging and need extra help, health professionals need to see the person at their home or have a call online instead.

	Health action plans are important, as when someone has a health check this should then lead to a health action plan being put together
	These health action plans should be used all year and reviewed at least once a year

	When the action plan is being updated it is a good time to think about people's support needs and making sure their information in their reasonable adjustment flag is updated.
	The General Medical Services (GMS) contract says that patient records must be kept up to date, including for patients with a learning disability.

	The Investment and Improvement Fund (IIF) gives support for health checks and health action plans for patients on the learning disability register aged 14 and over
	Health checks and health action plans for people with a learning disability are still supported by the Direct Enhanced Services (DES)

	Thank you for your work on delivering health checks. This is good for people with a learning disability and GP surgeries also get extra money for doing this important work
	The government's 10 Year Health Plan wants to move care from hospitals to local areas and stop people getting ill, rather than just treating them once they are unwell.
	GPs are very important in stopping people with a learning disability from getting ill and supporting them to lead healthy lives.
	Everyone in the GP surgery has a role to play in being aware of the Learning Disability register, and supporting people to benefit from being on the register.
	This is the gateway to good quality annual health checks and health action plans and supporting people with their health and wellbeing.



We know there is a lot of good work already happening and want to thank you for providing support for people with a learning disability.

Anna Lived Experience story



Anna Hoyle 47, Wirral

Anna has a learning disability and autism and wants to see better awareness in GP practices of the learning disability register, annual health checks and health passports.

She said: 'I only found out about the learning disability register a few years ago when there was a leaflet at work on the noticeboard and I asked someone about it, and how to get it.

'They told me there was a form and so I got my mum and dad to go through it, and then submitted it. But I only found out about by chance – unless you ask about it you wouldn't know about it.

‘I often speak to healthcare workers who’ve never heard about the learning disability register, health passports or other reasonable adjustments.

‘And I’d never known about getting a health action plan or even seen one. If it was in easy read and it was accessible that way, I’d be interested in one.’

Anna gets an annual health check and finds them helpful but struggled to get an appointment last year due to an oversight of her patient notes by a surgery nurse.

She said: ‘I didn’t get last year’s health check until February this year as it was very difficult to communicate with learning disability nurse – she kept ringing me even though the notes say on my doctor record to text.

‘We really need to make health and social care better and make things easier and more accessible for people like me.’

Rahima Begum Lived Experience Story



Rahima Begum, 28, from Newham in London has a mild learning disability, cerebral palsy, and needs 24-hour care. To communicate, she uses a special computer which tracks the motion of her eyes to form words.

Rahima said: “One challenge I face often is making others see or hear me, as they think that I can’t speak for myself, or I am completely unable.

“I have a good relationship with my GP as he has known me for many years. This means that I don’t have to repeat myself which gets very tiring. I have routine appointments with him only and it helps because you know that there will be someone that always checks in.

“Having those annual health care checks help with also giving me a routine and the space to prepare for the thing I need. My doctor knows me so well those checks help with him understanding me and how my health can go up and down.

“I like when doctors know me because they speak to me directly and involve me in my care. Everyone has a voice including me. We are all different in many ways, but we all want and live for the same thing which is respect for who we are and understanding.”

Additional information

The following resources are available to support you to provide good care for people with a learning disability:

- Accessible information standard [NHS England » Accessible Information Standard](#)
- Reasonable adjustment digital flag [Reasonable Adjustment Flag - NHS England Digital](#)
- Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism [The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism - elearning for healthcare](#)