



How social care staff can help someone with learning disabilities prepare for an annual health check

Annual health checks and why they are important



People with learning disabilities aged 14 and over should get an annual health check. Health checks are a reasonable adjustment to the care that people with learning disabilities get from their GP. Since April 2008 there has been extra money for GPs who do these.



People with learning disabilities are more likely to have some health problems but less likely to be able to tell people they feel unwell.

GPs often find health problems that can be treated when they do health checks for people with learning disabilities.



The annual health check is a chance for the person to get used to going to their GP practice, which may help them to feel more relaxed about going at other times. It also gives the GP the chance to get to know the person.



Even if the person goes to their GP regularly an annual health check is still a good idea as it will check things that are not looked at during a regular appointment.

Some people also have a medication review. This does not replace an annual check, which should also be carried out.



An annual health check should take 30 to 60 minutes. The person might see a nurse for some of the check, but they should also see their GP. The annual health check can be done over more than one visit if that is easier for the person you are supporting.



Everyone who has an annual health check should be offered a health action plan¹ by their GP. This should say what needs to be done to support their health. It should say who is going to help with all the actions.

How can I help someone with their annual health check?



Most GP surgeries will send an invitation for an annual health check. If the person you support doesn't receive a letter you should call their GP surgery to arrange an annual health check for them.



Encourage the person you support to attend an annual health check. If they want a supporter to go with them this should be someone they know and trust. They should choose who this is.



Identify any barriers to them going to the health check and help to overcome them.

Ask the GP surgery to do the health check at the person's home if it is not possible for them to go to the surgery.



Help the person you support to know what to expect at their check.

There are useful [easy read leaflets](#)².

There are useful [videos](#)³.



Some surgeries will send a questionnaire to be filled in before the annual health check. People may need help to fill this in.



Before the health check, help the person to think about any concerns they have about their health that they want to talk about.

Help them think if there are any questions they want to ask the GP or the nurse.



You need to know what should be done as part of the health check.

You can find [information about this](#)⁴.

If anything has not been done then you need to ask why.



Make sure the Mental Capacity Act is used when medical decisions are being made. There is an information sheet about this.⁵

Make sure someone has an independent mental capacity advocate if they need one.



NHS England has commissioned guidance and an accompanying film to support social care providers who want to improve the health and therefore the lives of the people they support.

This covers what [social care staff need to know](#)⁶ about GP learning disability registers, annual health checks and the summary care record.

Key messages:

- most people with learning disabilities are entitled to an annual health check
- those who support people with a learning disability should ask their GP surgery for an annual health check appointment if one has not been offered
- these can help identify health problems that can be treated
- everyone who has an annual health check should be offered a health action plan
- there are lots of resources to help social care staff help someone prepare for an annual health check

This is the third in a series of health factsheets for social care staff. You can find others and more [guidance](#) for social care providers.

There is a [supporting set of slides](#) for this document that can be used by social care staff as a training resource.

The pictures in this factsheet are from Photosymbols: www.photosymbols.co.uk

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¹ <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/toolkits/-/media/CDF78960FA5C43B09F641EB06E46AB94.ashx>

² https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-06/Annual_health_checks_Easy_Read_1.pdf

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8qLXdZexll&feature=youtu.be>

⁴ https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-06/Annual_health_checks_Standard_0.pdf

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/655376/Social_care_staff_briefing_sheet_on_Mental_Capacity_Act_in_learning_disabilities.pdf

⁶ <https://www.ndti.org.uk/resources/publications/better-health-for-people-with-learning-disabilities>