

Annual Health Checks:

What people with learning disabilities said

Easy Read version of: Experiences of Annual Health Checks: Voices from the Learning Disability Community



**easy
read**



Contents



3 Introduction



4 Annual Health Checks



6 Asking people what they thought



7 What people said



13 People who have never had an Annual Health Check



14 What should happen now?



18 Some words of support from our partners



19 For more information

Introduction



Healthwatch Hertfordshire helps people to speak up about health and care services in Hertfordshire.



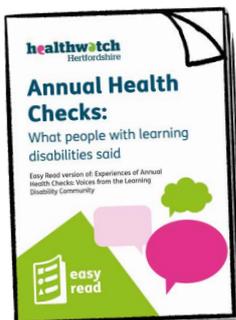
We have been looking into Annual Health Checks for people with learning disabilities.



An Annual Health Check happens once a year, sometimes over a few appointments. Your doctor checks your health and gives you some advice.



We asked people with learning disabilities what they thought.



This report explains what people said.

Annual Health Checks



People with learning disabilities tend to have worse health and can die earlier than other people.



The NHS wants to improve the health of people with learning disabilities.



All people with learning disabilities can have a free health check with their local doctor every year.



The learning disability register

The **learning disability register** is a list of people with learning disabilities.



If your doctor thinks you have learning disabilities, they will ask you if you want to be on the register.



There are about 1 and a half million people with learning disabilities in the UK.



But there are only about 300,000 on the learning disability register.



You have to be on the learning disability register to get an Annual Health Check.



In Hertfordshire, about 7 out of every 10 people who are on the learning disability register are getting an Annual Health Check.

Asking people what they thought



We worked with:

- Hertfordshire County Council
- Herts People First
- Carers in Hertfordshire
- Watford Mencap
- Learning Disability Nurses.



Together we created a questionnaire.

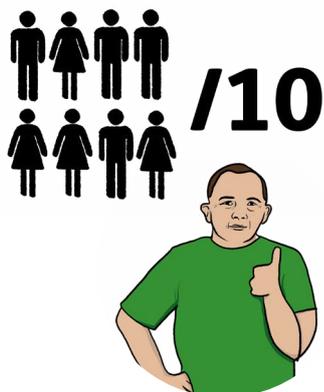


353 people completed the questionnaire.



We also spoke to 138 people at Learning Disability Forums.

What people said

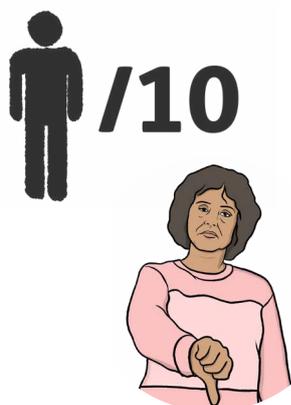


Happy with the Annual Health Checks

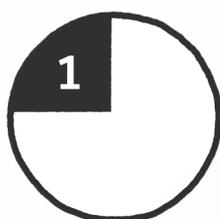
About 8 out of every 10 people said they were happy to have an Annual Health Check.



About 7 out of 10 said their Annual Health Check was good. But most do not know what they should expect at an Annual Health Check.



About 1 out of every 10 people didn't like the Annual Health Check. Some said that the doctor wasn't very friendly.



Communication

About a quarter of people said the doctor could have explained things better.





About a quarter said that the doctors surgery did not communicate well.



Most people said they did not get their letter in Easy Read.



Usual doctor

It is usually better to have your Health Check with your usual doctor.



But a quarter of people had to have their Health Check with someone else.



Choice

About 3 out of every 10 people couldn't get an appointment at a time that was good for them.



How long?

The NHS says that Annual Health Checks should last between 30 minutes and 1 hour.



But most people said their Health Check only lasted between 5 and 10 minutes.

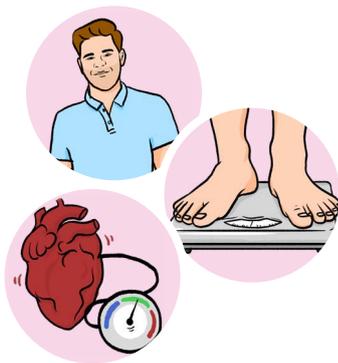


People said they wanted more time to talk about their health and mental health.



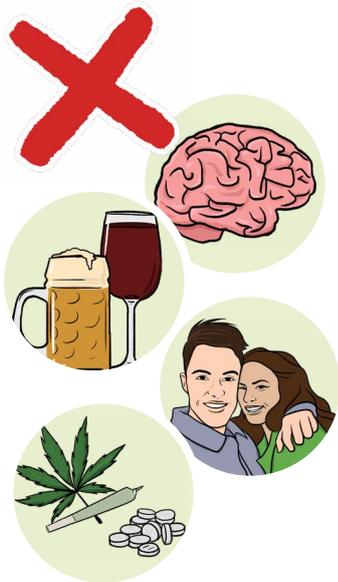
Examination

Annual Health Checks should look at all the different parts of your health and mental health.



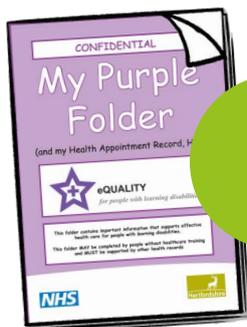
But most people said the doctor only did a basic check.

Mostly they just measured your height, weight and blood pressure.



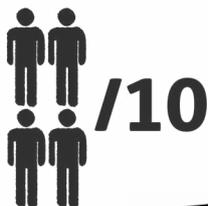
They didn't ask about:

- your mental health
- how much alcohol you drink
- your sexual health
- if you took drugs.



The purple folder

Your purple folder gives your doctor information about you to help you get the right treatment.



Nearly 4 out of 10 doctors did not look at the purple folder during the Annual Health Check.



Health Action Plans

Health Action Plans are plans to keep you healthy.

They include ways you can live in a healthy way.



Your doctor should give you a Health Action Plan at the end of your Annual Health Check.



Nearly half of you said you weren't given a Health Action Plan.



Support

People with learning disabilities usually need a bit of extra support to make arrangements for meetings.



Most people said they had not been given any information about how to get ready for the Annual Health Check.



Nearly all the people we spoke to said they wanted to take a carer or support worker with them to the Annual Health Check.



A learning disability nurse can also come with you to an Annual Health Check. But most people did not know they were allowed to do this.

Learning Disability Champion



Some doctors surgeries have someone on the staff who helps people with learning disabilities. They are called a Learning Disability Champion.



But about 8 out of 10 people did not know what a Learning Disability Champion was.

People who have never had an Annual Health Check

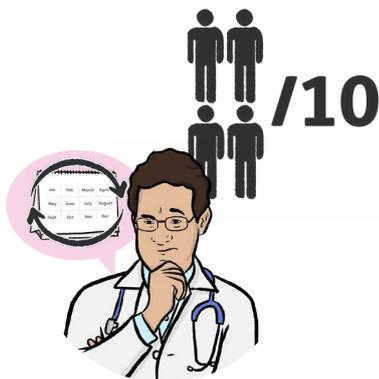
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About 3 out of every 10 people said they have never had an Annual Health Check.



About half of these people didn't know you can get an Annual Health Check.



About 4 out of 10 of these people said that they had never been offered an Annual Health Check.

 /10



About 1 in every 10 people said that they didn't have the confidence or enough time to organise a check.

What should happen now?

We think that doctors should do these things:



Access

1. Staff at doctors surgeries should learn more about how to make health services accessible to people with learning disabilities.



2. Staff at doctors surgeries should encourage people with learning disabilities to go on the Learning Disability Register.



Choice

3. Surgeries should make sure you can see your usual doctor.



4. Surgeries should let people choose the best time to have their Annual Health Check.



Information

5. Doctors should make their information in Easy Read.



6. Communications to people with learning disabilities should include all the information they need including how to get ready for an Annual Health Check.



The Check

7. Doctors should spend between 30 minutes and an hour on each Annual Health Check.



8. Doctors should give people a Health Action Plan.



9. Doctors should check how good the Annual Health Checks are so they can make things better.



10. Doctors should use the purple folders properly.



Support

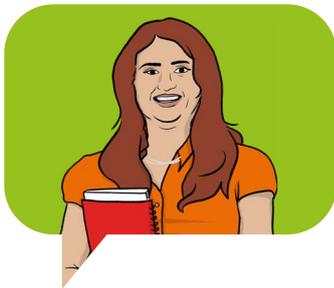
11. People should know what support they can have at their Annual Health Check.



12. Communications from the doctor should remind people that they can have their carer or support worker with them.



13. All doctors surgeries should have a Learning Disability Champion.



14. You should be told if the surgery has a Learning Disability Champion.

Some words of support from our partners

“On behalf of Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System, I welcome Healthwatch Hertfordshire’s report ‘Experiences of Annual Health Checks.’ Annual Health Checks were established to address the health inequalities that people with learning disabilities so often face. It is therefore vital that we ensure everyone who would benefit from such an annual review experiences a thorough and satisfactory one. The checks need to be offered in a way that gives people choice and also encourage them to bring a relative or carer if this would be helpful for them.

The findings will certainly shape the work that is already underway to improve the uptake of Annual Health Checks as well as the steps to improve the quality of them.”

The Right Hon Paul Burstow, Independent Chair for Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System

“The Integrated Health & Care Commissioning Team welcomes this report and its recommendations which will support our ongoing support with key partners to increase the uptake and quality of Annual Health Checks for people with learning disabilities. In particular the Health Liaison Team are working closely with GP practices to ensure reasonable adjustments are made to enable people with learning disabilities to access good quality healthcare and support. However, as this report has demonstrated there is still room for improvement.

The recommendations highlighted in this report will be shared with the members of our Improving Health Outcomes Group (IHOG). Chaired by the GP lead for learning disabilities (Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group), the role of this group is to address health inequalities in order to improve the health outcomes of people with learning disabilities. The recommendations will be addressed by this group and will also be referenced in the Action Plan Year 2 of the Learning Disability Strategy 2019-2024.”

Hansa Nariapara, Commissioning Officer for Hertfordshire County Council

“We commend the report produced by Healthwatch on Annual Health Checks. The research and report are invaluable to enable our care and services to improve following feedback from those at the heart of our work. We need to ensure the health inequalities experienced by people with a learning disability are addressed through the Annual Health Check and without their feedback it would not be possible to ensure this is effective. We are grateful to Healthwatch for this work and also to those who participated in the research.

The report and recommendations will be shared with all members of the Improving Health Outcomes Group (IHOG) and with all GPs in Hertfordshire. The recommendations will be addressed through IHOG and actions taken forward. We will continue to monitor the uptake of the Learning Disabilities Annual Health Checks. There is also a Covid-19 pathway which was developed to ensure these can be completed safely at this time.”

Dr Victoria McCulloch, Learning Disability Clinical Lead for Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group

Dr Anindita Saha, Learning Disability Clinical Lead for East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group

For more information



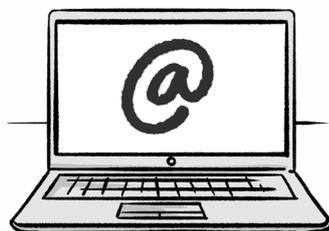
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