

Physical health checks for adults with learning disabilities

Suggested approach from Maureen Orr, Democratic Support and Scrutiny Team Manager

Examination of the take-up of physical health checks for adults with learning disabilities in Norfolk.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 27 September 2017 Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board received a report on 'Transforming Care Partnership – Services for Adults with a Learning Disability'. The Board noted that there was a lower life expectancy for people with learning difficulties and considered it would be useful to understand the level of physical health checks for adults with learning difficulties across Norfolk and what is being done about those people not coming forward for checks. It was suggested that Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NHOSC) might wish to investigate this area. NHOSC added the subject to its Forward Work Programme on 26 October 2017.
- 1.2 As reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board in September 2017, the Norfolk and Waveney CCGs are working to ensure that physical health checks are implemented for people with learning disabilities including new cancer screening programmes. There is ongoing work to align health and social care Learning Disability Registers to support this aim. The outcome of the work will be:-
 - To make a significant and sustained increase the number of people on Learning Disability (LD) registers, and increase the number of people who have LD health checks.
 - To raise awareness of annual health checks and the primary care pathway, including medication reviews and the summary care record, for people with LD amongst local people.
 - To ensure that annual health checks are done consistently and to a high standard across the Transforming Care Partnership (TCP), including medication reviews (STOMP – Stopping Over-Medication of People with a Learning Disability).
 - To increase the use of summary care records for people with LD.

2. Annual Health Check for young people and adults with learning disabilities

- 2.1 NHS Annual Health Checks for adults with learning disabilities are offered under a different scheme from the Health Checks for adults aged 40 – 74

in the general population. Health Checks for 40 – 74 year olds are commissioned by Public Health, Norfolk County Council, and can be provided at pharmacies as well as at GP practices. They assess people's risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, diabetes and dementia every five years.

2.2 NHS Annual Health Checks for adults with learning disabilities are commissioned by local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) who have taken over the responsibility for GP primary care commissioning from NHS England. GP practices are encouraged to identify all patients aged 14 and over with learning disabilities, to maintain a learning disabilities 'health check' register and to offer individuals an Annual Health Check, which includes producing a health action plan.

2.3 The learning disabilities health check scheme is one of a number of GP enhanced services. Enhanced services are voluntary for GP practices, who may or may not contract to deliver them. The payment they receive for each learning disabilities health check is £140 (under the 2017-18 contract). A template is available for guidance of GPs carrying out the tests but use of the template is at their discretion.

2.4 The NHS Choices website provides public information about Learning Disabilities Annual Health Checks:-

- The Annual Health Check scheme is for adults and young people aged 14 and over with learning disabilities who need more support and who may otherwise have health conditions that go undetected.
- People aged 14 and over who have been assessed as having moderate, severe or profound learning disabilities, or people with a mild learning disability who have other complex health needs, are entitled to a check.
- Those who are known to their local authority social services, and who are registered with a GP who knows their medical history, should be invited by their GP practice to come for an Annual Health Check.
- The Annual Health Check takes up to one hour and can be much quicker depending on:
 - How often the person normally visits their doctor
 - Their overall health and wellbeing
 - Their lifestyle (for example whether they drink alcohol or smoke)
 - How much of the consultation they decide to consent to
- During the health check the GP or practice nurse will carry out the following for the patient:-
 - a general physical examination, including checking their weight, heart rate, blood pressure and taking blood and urine samples
 - assessing the patient's behaviour, including asking questions about their lifestyle, and mental health
 - a check for epilepsy
 - a check on any prescribed medicines the patient is currently taking

- a check on whether any chronic illnesses, such as asthma or diabetes, are being well managed
 - a review of any arrangements with other health professionals, such as physiotherapists or speech therapists
- If the person's learning disability has a specific cause, the GP or practice nurse can do extra tests for particular health risks. For people with Down's syndrome, for example, they may do a test to see whether their thyroid is working properly.
- The Annual Health Check is also a good opportunity to review any transitional arrangements that take place when a patient turns 18.
- The GP or practice nurse will also provide the patient with any relevant health information, such as advice on healthy eating, exercise, contraception or stop smoking support.
- Where the patient's needs relating to their learning disability are written down in a health profile or health action plan the GP or nurse can put 'reasonable adjustments' in place to help people have a successful health check. Adjustments can include:-
 - using pictures, large print, and straightforward language to help explain what is happening
 - booking longer appointments
 - scheduling an appointment that starts at the beginning or end of the day, so people don't have to wait

3. National situation

- 3.1 That people with learning disabilities suffer poorer health, lower life expectancy and a higher level of preventable deaths than the general population has been recognised for some time. There have been numerous investigations, reports and recommendations aimed at improving the situation and while there has been progress there is room for improvement. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Is England Fairer?' report published in April 2016 summarised the progress made since 2010 and the inequalities that still exist in the health and care of people with learning disabilities compared to the general population:-
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/britain-fairer/england-fairer-introduction/englands-most-disadvantaged-groups>
- 3.2 One of the Commission's concerns was the finding that three quarters of Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) included no information on the number of children with learning disabilities in their area and 19 out of 20 gave no indication of future prevalence (Baines and Hatton, 2014).
- 3.3 A summary of the 'Health and Care of People with Learning Disabilities: 2016-17' published by NHS Digital in December 2017 (attached at **Appendix A**) includes data collected from over half of GP practices in England to identify differences in the treatment, health status and outcomes of people with learning disabilities compared to the rest of the population. The data collection for this survey appears to have covered less than 40% of patients registered in Norfolk but with 57.4% coverage of patients across England as a whole, it provides some useful context.

4. Purpose of today's meeting

- 4.1 The focus of today's meeting is to ascertain the level of Annual Health Checks for people with learning disabilities that are offered and taken up across Norfolk and ask what more the commissioners could do to increase the numbers.
- 4.2 The relevant CCG commissioners have been asked to report to NHOSC on the local situation with:-
- Information on life expectancy of people with learning disabilities compared to the general population
 - Other information on the physical health of adults with learning disabilities in Norfolk, e.g. prevalence of long term conditions and other physical ill-health compared to the general population
 - Information on what the Learning Disabilities Health Check Scheme is; who commissions local GPs to provide it; how many local GPs provide it across Norfolk and the geographic spread
 - How many adults with learning disabilities are resident in Norfolk and how many of them are registered to receive the annual health check in each CCG area?
 - How many of those who are registered to receive the annual health check were offered it in the past year, and how many of those took it up in each CCG area?
 - What is being done to encourage more adults with learning disabilities to be registered for annual health checks and to attend for the health check?
 - What is the level of investment in this service in each CCG area?
- 4.3 South Norfolk CCG is the lead CCG for the Norfolk and Waveney Sustainability Transformation Plan (STP) for learning disabilities and Great Yarmouth and Waveney CCG is the lead for primary care. The two CCGs have provided the report at **Appendix B** and representatives will attend to answer Members' questions.

5. Suggested approach

- 5.1 After the CCG representatives have presented their report, the committee may wish to discuss the following areas:-
- (a) Do the commissioners have sufficient local information on the prevalence of learning disabilities, or the numbers of young people and adults with learning disabilities in Norfolk, to reliably assess what proportion of the total numbers with learning disabilities are currently included on local GPs' learning disabilities 'health check' registers, and to plan for future needs?

- (b) What are the CCGs' comments about the difference between the 2011 national estimate of the number of adults with learning disabilities living in Norfolk and Waveney (21,786 in total, of which 3315 were counted as having severe or moderate disabilities and 5136 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and the number currently included on GP learning disability registers (5,435 in 2016/17)?
- (c) What progress has there been towards resolving the data quality issues around learning disabilities annual health checks and when do commissioners expect to have reliable data to enable them to monitor progress?
- (d) How can the commissioners be assured of the quality of the 'Annual Health Check' provided, particularly in practices where the national templates for carrying out the check are not in use?
- (e) What is being done to increase the take-up rate of learning disabilities annual health checks offered to young people and adults with learning disabilities?
- (f) Increasing the take-up of learning disabilities annual health checks would require extra payments to primary care. What increase in expenditure have the CCGs planned to incur in this respect?

6. Action

6.1 Following the discussions with representatives at today's meeting, Members may wish to consider whether:-

- (a) There is further information or progress updates that the committee wishes to receive at a future meeting or in the NHOSC Briefing.
- (b) There are comments or recommendations that the committee wishes to make as a result of today's discussions.



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