



## Reasonable Adjustments for People with Learning Disabilities. (Easy Read)

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# Introduction



People with learning disabilities can find it hard to use health services.



Health services should make 'reasonable adjustments' to help people with learning disabilities use services.



A reasonable adjustment is a change that has been made to a service so that people with learning disabilities can use them like anyone else.



This may mean having a longer appointment time, easy read information or other changes that mean services are easier to use.



The law says that health services and other public services need to make reasonable adjustments.



We asked Health Trusts what they were doing about reasonable adjustments.

We wrote a report about what they told us.



We also wrote a report for health service staff about what they should be doing about reasonable adjustments.



This is an easy read version of the guidance we wrote about reasonable adjustments.



The report tells you what the issues are, and what health staff can do to make things better. You can ask health services what they are doing to put reasonable adjustments in place.

## Accessible Information

### Issue



**People with learning disabilities may not understand information about health or health services.**



**They may need easy read information, or information on a tape or DVD.**



**A lot of health services said they had easy read information. The information was not always given out unless people asked for it.**



**Some health services said there was easy read information on the website.**



**Most health services did not have information on DVD's and tapes.**

## **What health services should do**



- Health services should have a policy about accessible information.

It is important to have accessible information in all parts of the service.



- Information should be on tape or DVD if needed.



- It helps if the Trust website has accessible information on it so staff can use it easily.



- It helps to have a group who make sure that accessible information is available.

The group should include people with learning disabilities and family carers.



- Health services should check that people with learning disabilities and their families get the information they need.



- Staff need to know how to communicate with people with learning disabilities, who may have lots of different needs.

Specialist learning disability staff can help.



## **Working with families**

### **Issue**



**Using health services can be very stressful for someone with a learning disability as they may not understand what is happening to them.**



**Family carers often give good support to people with learning disabilities and have important information about what they need and want.**



**Sometimes family carer's are not listened to. Family carer's should be made welcome and given the information that they need.**

## What health services should do



- When a person with learning disabilities needs to go to hospital, they and their family should be part of planning what needs to happen.



- There should be information from the hospital to help them plan.



- There should be a named person at the hospital they can talk to.



- Health services should have a policy which says what support is available to carers.

The policy should include things like where to get something to eat and where to park the car.





- There should be clear information about what family carers and care staff can do to support the person in hospital, and what hospital staff should do.

Sometimes carers can be asked to do too much.



- Family carers often know lots of information about the person with a learning disability.

They should be part of decision-making as long as the person with the learning disability says it is okay.



- If the person with learning disabilities can't say what they want, people need to make decisions that are in their 'best interest'.

Best interest decisions should include family carers where possible.



- Family carers are often very busy. Health staff should make sure that their needs are thought about when planning care for the person.

## **Being able to say what you want and having people to speak up for you.**

### **Issue**



**Lots of health services have a policy about mental capacity (whether people can decide for themselves or not) but it is not clear how much staff know about it.**



**Sometimes the law is not followed.**



**For example, family carers have been asked to sign forms saying what their adult son or daughter wants (consent forms).**

## What health services should do



- There should be a policy on the Mental Capacity Act.

Staff should know about it.

There should be information about how to use the policy in all health services.



- Staff should have training on the policy. Health services should make sure this happens.



- Health services should do a yearly check on how treatment decisions are made for all people with a learning disability.

This check should show how family carers were involved in decisions.



- There are people called Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCAs).

They can help if people can't make a decision for themselves.



- There is also an Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) that can help when people are not happy with the service they get.



- The Trust board can ask for a report to show how people with learning disabilities are using these services.



- People with learning disabilities, family carers and paid supporters should be given information about their rights under the Mental Capacity Act.

## Using a service



### **a) the appointment**

## Issue



**People with learning disabilities may not understand why they need to use health services and may be scared of things like blood tests. There are lots of things that can be done to help.**

## What health services should do



- Computer records and files should say if the person has a learning disability. This will help staff know what reasonable adjustments need to be made.





- Sometimes people with a learning disability find it hard to use a telephone and don't understand appointment letters.

Easy read appointment letters should be sent.



- Health service staff should also phone the person with learning disabilities the day before the appointment to remind them about it



- Appointments are often too short.

Having a longer appointment at the start of the day or during quiet times can help.



- People with learning disabilities are less likely to use health services and may not know if they are ill.

Health checks are good at finding out if there is something wrong.

Family doctors should offer health checks every year.



- It is good if health services do a check of appointments for people with learning disabilities to see what reasonable adjustments were made.

This can help staff think about how to provide better services.



- People with learning disabilities should be helped to understand their health needs.

Staff should help people with learning disabilities to use their Health Action Plan.



## **b) Going to hospital or to the doctors**



### **Issue**

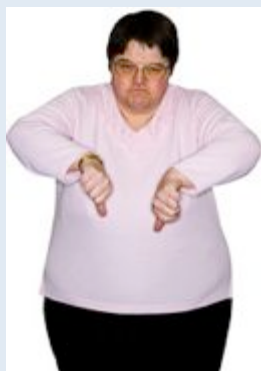
**People with learning disabilities find it hard to use health services.**

**They can find it hard to say what they feel like or what is wrong.**



**Sometimes staff don't understand that a person is behaving differently because they are ill or in pain.**

**They may think it is just because the person has a learning disability.**



**This means that people may not get the treatment they need.**



**Sometimes people with learning disabilities get less good treatment than other people.**

**This can be because staff think they don't have very good lives, so it is not worth treating them.**

### **What health staff should do**



- Staff should use the person's health passport or hospital book to make sure people get the right support.

If there isn't one staff should ask the people that know the person best.



- People with learning disabilities may show pain in ways that health staff don't recognise.

So having information about how the person shows pain is very important.



- Staff need to be trained about this.



- Information about food in hospital should be accessible.



- Some people find it difficult to swallow.

There is guidance that staff can use to help them about this.



- To make sure people with learning disabilities are safe in hospital, a risk assessment should be done.



- If something goes wrong, it is important that the report says that the person has a learning disability.

Staff should learn from what went wrong so it doesn't happen again.

### **c) leaving hospital**



#### **Issue**

**When someone leaves hospital, they often need more support, even if this is for a little while.**

**If the support is not in place, the person may not get better like they should do.**



#### **What health services should do**

- Thinking about what happens when a person leaves hospital needs to begin when the person goes into hospital or before.





- It is important to use the person centred plan to help think about what needs to happen.



- There may need to be lots of people involved in planning if the person will need a lot of support or if their needs have changed.



- If a person's needs have changed and they can't say what they want, a decision needs to be made in their best interest.



- People should not be left in hospital because services can't agree how support will be paid for.



- When the person leaves hospital, any changes should be written in the Health passport.



- If a person leaves hospital too early they may not get well, and have to come back to hospital.

This should be recorded, so that staff can learn from it.



- There should be accessible information about any other health services the person needs to go to.

## **Ways of checking what is happening**

### **Issue**



**Health services should know who has a learning disability and what they are being treated for.**

**This should be part of the information that they collect, so that they plan better health services.**



**At the moment a lot of health services don't have very good information.**

## **What health services should do**



- **Health services need to agree how people with learning disabilities will be identified in information and data.**



- Information about how often health services are used by people with learning disabilities needs to be shared with them and their families.



- There should be information about the person with learning disabilities on computers and files so that staff know what reasonable adjustments will help.



- Health Passports and Health Action Plans should be used by health services as they have more information about the person.

## **Being involved**

### **Issue**



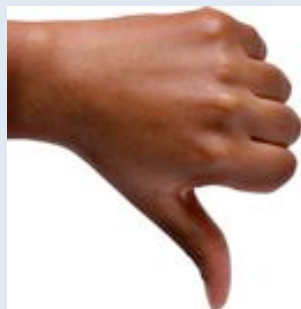
**It is hard for people with learning disabilities and their families to have their voices heard in services.**

**Surveys and other ways of checking people's experience of health services are often not accessible.**



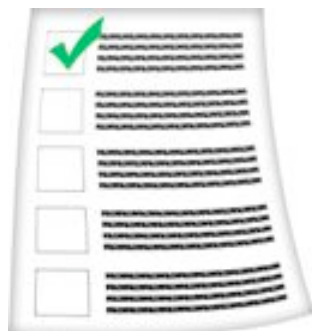
**Sometimes people with learning disabilities are afraid to complain.**

**Complaints procedures can also be hard to understand.**



**There is not much evidence to show that issues for people with learning disabilities are being talked about at the Trust Board.**

### **What health services should do**



- Checks on what people think of health services should include people with learning disabilities.

What they say should be clearly identified in reports.



- There should be an accessible complaints procedure.



- People with learning disabilities and their families should be supported to complain.

There should be evidence of how services have changed as a result of complaints.



- People with learning disabilities and family carers should help to train staff.

They can tell staff what needs to happen from their own experience.



- The issues people with learning disabilities face should be talked about at board level.



- Actions need to be reported back to groups like the Learning Disability Partnership Board.





- There should be an action plan about how to put in place reasonable adjustments for people with learning disabilities.

This should be checked by the board.



- People with learning disabilities and their families should be supported to be members and governors of Foundation Trusts.

## Having a job

### Issue

**Not many people with learning disabilities have jobs, but lots want to work.**

**People with learning disabilities can be very good at doing jobs if they have the right support, but not many health services employ people with learning disabilities.**



## What health services should do



- There are organisations called Supported Employment providers who help people get jobs.



- They can help health services employ people with learning disabilities.



- Easy read adverts are very helpful.

These should be given to advocacy groups

- People with learning disabilities can find interviews difficult.

There is something called a working interview which means that people can show how they can do a job.

This can be helpful for people with learning disabilities.





- There is something called Project SEARCH where people with learning disabilities learn how to do jobs at work.

Health services can become part of this project.

Project search helps to give people training so that they can get paid work.



- People with learning disabilities who have jobs need to be offered training and given the same opportunities as other staff.

## **Equality Impact Assessments**

### **Issue**



**An equality impact assessment (EIA) is a tool that helps public authorities to check their policies work for all people including people with learning disabilities.**

**When we asked Trusts about this, it was not clear what they were doing.**

## What health services should do



- People with learning disabilities and family carers should be involved in Equality Impact Assessments.

This will help make sure their needs are thought about.



For more information about improving health and lives please go to [www.ihal.org.uk](http://www.ihal.org.uk)



Easy read version prepared with the aid of Photo Symbols 4



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