

GP Annual Health Checks for Teenagers with a Learning Disability

Background

Since the 1990s there have been a number of reports and case studies that have consistently highlighted that in England people with learning disabilities die younger than people without learning disabilities. More recently, analysis of data from the Primary Care Research Database¹ suggested that people with learning disabilities had a life expectancy 19.7 years lower than people without learning disabilities.

GP Annual Health Checks for People with a Learning Disability

In 2009, the Department of Health asked GPs to introduce 'Annual Health Checks' for People with a Learning Disability to identify, at an early stage, potentially avoidable illness and premature death. These have proved particularly successful across the South West with the highest % coverage of this group of patients nationally.

Teenagers

Following the successful introduction of these checks for adults, the Department of Health introduced Annual Checks for Teenagers between 14 and 17 in 2014. The uptake of these checks is not as high as with adults.

SENCO

This is where you come in! As you know, the teenage years are a time of rapid growth, often with emotional turbulence and insecurity. The development of 'personhood' requires the management of new pleasures and problems whether or not you have a Learning Disability. Teenagers share a multitude of age-specific, common medical issues (eg. spots, menstrual issues, emergent sexuality, mood swings, national testing, challenging behaviour towards family and teaching staff etc.) some of which have inherent physical and coercive risk.

Young people between the ages of 14 and 17 who have a learning disability are eligible for an annual health check. Please, then, find opportunities to encourage both them, and their parents, to take up this important opportunity to discuss both their physical and mental health with their GP and build relationships to help ensure their future good health.

If you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you, in anticipation,

Dr Guy Bradley-Smith

guy.bradley-smith@nhs.net

Lead for Learning Disability for NEW Devon CCG

Reference

¹ Glover G, Williams R, Heslop P, Oyinola J, Grey J. (2016) *Mortality in people with intellectual disabilities in England*. Journal of Intellectual Disabilities Research. Early view. Doi: 10.1111/jidr.12314