



*Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS*

*Tel: 020 7972 5000
Fax: 020 7972 4202*

11 February 2009

To: Chief Executives of Councils and PCTs

Gateway Reference: 11326

HEALTH CHECKS FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

In September 2008, NHS Employers and the BMA published guidance on a number of new 'Directed Enhanced Services' for GP practices for 2008/09 and 2009/10, which included annual health checks for adults with learning disabilities.

The Secretary of State for Health has now issued the Directions that require Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to offer GP practices in their area the opportunity to provide these enhanced services. In line with the September 2008 guidance, a number of PCTs have already undertaken the preparatory work needed to allow these health checks to begin, in particular agreeing lists of individuals eligible for checks and arranging training for practices. Now that the Directions have been published, it is important that PCTs who have not already done so carry out this work and enable practices to start undertaking health checks.

As set out in the July 2008 guidance, there needs to be liaison between PCTs and Local Authorities to collate and cross-reference information to identify people who are eligible for health checks (see definition below). Information sharing should be carried out according to Caldicott guidelines and will only require basic data sharing (name, address and GP details). If a Local Authority learning disability register is not kept, the necessary information should be available from data collected when individuals are referred to social services.

The definition of those eligible for health checks is those who:

- are adults with learning disabilities known to councils because they have been assessed for a service within the year the health check is taking place

and

- are primarily known to councils because of their learning disability

Individuals may or may not be actively receiving support from social services during the counting period.

The specification for the 'Directed Enhanced Service' also requires GP practices to have attended a multi-professional education session. It includes a framework outlining the key content to the training:

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/pay-conditions/primary-893.cfm>

Further good practice information is available on the Valuing People website:

<http://valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople144.jsp>

The number of eligible people receiving annual checks is one of the NHS Vital Signs indicators. All annual health checks carried out between April 2008 and March 2009 will count towards the 2008/09 indicator, which will be measured in March 2009.

We welcome your support in implementing this important policy. There is good evidence that people with learning disabilities are more likely to have greater health needs than the general population and experience more barriers to accessing primary care services. The report of Sir Jonathan Michael's Independent Inquiry on access to healthcare for people with learning disabilities (*'Healthcare for All'*, July 2008) recommended enhanced primary care services which include regular health checks provided by GP practices. The Government accepted Sir Jonathan's recommendations as part of the new three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities, *Valuing People Now* (January 2009).

Further information, including responses to frequently asked questions about delivering health checks, is available via the Primary Care Contracting website <http://www.pcc.nhs.uk/medical>.

Thank you for your co-operation.



Mark Britnell
Director General of Commissioning & System Management



David Behan
Director General, Social Care, Local Government & Care Partnerships