



Health Passports: A survey Improving healthcare access for people with a learning disability.

Why did we carry out this investigation?

Health Passports have been in use in Buckinghamshire by people with a learning disability, for nearly 2 years. Buckinghamshire Learning Disability Services and Talkback wanted to make sure that they are working well for the people using it, so this project was undertaken to find out what people thought about them.

Why was it important to do?

This survey and its findings provide a valuable insight into how Health Passports can improve healthcare access for people with a learning disability. Their widespread application observes the requirement by healthcare providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' as directed by the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and complies with the expectation of the Disability Equality Duty (2006) that people with a disability should not only be treated 'the same' as others but that in order to achieve equal outcomes, as and when required, they should be treated differently. As a direct consequence, Health Passports can ensure that any institutional discrimination (Mencap:2007:1), diagnostic overshadowing (Disability Rights Commission:2006:42) or health inequalities (Disability Rights Commission:2006:31) experienced by people with a learning disability are highlighted and addressed.



Talkback

Health Passport



Furthermore, as this survey actively involved people with a learning disability, it identified how these individuals can be supported and encouraged to help design services that truly deliver person-centred care (Department of Health:2007:16) and become active partners in managing their own health (Disability Rights Commission:2006:43).

Health Passports can be used as an innocuous tool for taking forward the learning disability agenda. They can improve the quality of healthcare services, making them more accessible to people with a learning disability and enhancing the patient experience.

How did we do it?

We widely distributed questionnaires to people with a learning disability, their family carers, learning disability staff and healthcare workers asking them what they thought about Health Passports. We also interviewed many individuals and found out more about personal experiences through letters, telephone calls and other communications.

What did we find out?

We found that Health Passports are regarded as:

- a good idea
- an informative tool that makes information easy to understand
- useful when going into hospital or in an emergency
- assisting the communication with health professionals
- providing an accurate picture of individuals' health needs
- acting as a memory aid
- used beyond Buckinghamshire borders and also taken on holidays

We discovered that some of the pages of the Health Passports need revising and that valuable information can be added.

There are individuals who would like to see another version of the Health Passport developed to meet the needs of people who are able to read and understand information more easily.

We learnt that generally people with a learning disability require some form of support in the use and maintenance of their Health Passports.

We also found out that the profile of Health Passports and their use by people with a learning disability need to be raised again and sustained.

What do these findings tell us?

These findings tell us that:

1. this report and its findings need to be published and widely circulated and made available on the www.healthpassport.co.uk website
2. there are pages in the Health Passports that require refreshing and updating
3. new pages containing valuable information need to be incorporated within the current Health Passport
4. revised and additional pages require distribution to existing Health Passports' holders
5. complete (updated) versions of the Health Passport need to be assembled for prospective holders
6. an additional version of the Health Passport for people who are able to read and understand information needs to be designed

7. this other type of Health Passport must be widely publicised and distributed to those who would prefer this version
8. the dedicated telephone line and the www.healthpassport.co.uk website needs to continue
9. the 2008 Health Passport edition needs to be re-launched to a widespread audience, including:
 - a. people with a learning disability
 - b. family carers
 - c. members of learning disability staff, from both statutory and private provision
 - d. members of healthcare staff, from a diverse range of healthcare services

Find out more

To read the full report or to find out more about Health Passports please go to: www.healthpassport.co.uk

You can also contact **Talkback** on: **01494 434 448**

Dedicated Health Passport telephone line: **01494 434 449**

References

Department of Health (2007) *Promoting equality: Response from Department of Health to the Disability Rights Commission Report, 'Equal Treatment: Closing the Gap'*. London: Department of Health.

Disability Rights Commission (2006) *Equal Treatment: Closing the Gap*, London: Disability Rights Commission.

Mencap (2007) *Death by Indifference*, London: Mencap.

Further information

A copy of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995/2005) can be accessed via:

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2005/ukpga_20050013_en_1

Further details of the Disability Equality Duty can be obtained from the following government website:
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_10038105

Department of Health (2007) *Valuing People Now: From Progress to Transformation*. London: Department of Health.

Department of Health (2001) *Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century*. London: Department of Health.

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