



Somerset LeDeR Newsletter

February 2019 - 2nd Edition

Message from Paul Townsend

(Director of Mental Health & Learning Disability Care at Taunton and Somerset & Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)



Hello, my name is Paul Townsend, and I started in my role as Director of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Care at Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust last year, it's been a busy time finding out about Somerset and the services we provide. A highlight for me was attending a Forum in

Warwick on 'Delivering quality care for people with Learning Disabilities' where Robert Tunmore, LeDeR regional co-ordinator talked about how the LeDeR report showed people with a learning disability are three times more likely to die from conditions that are amenable to treatment, and that life expectancy for women was up to 29 years less than the general population. Hearing these numbers so starkly presented was staggering and I'm passionate about raising the profile of the needs of people with a learning disability and addressing these inequalities. The day also highlighted evidence of good practice, with reasonable adjustments being made in all care settings for people with a learning disability, and the way local areas are putting learning into action through the LeDeR process. With the theme of this newsletter it's clear we still need to improve our understanding of the application of the Mental Capacity Act and awareness of the health needs of people with a learning disability.

Somerset LeDeR Reviews

48 notifications reported 35 initial reviews completed
12 Reviews in progress 25 cases completed closed
1 unallocated cases

Main causes of death (where reported):

Chest/Respiratory Tract Infection (5)	Pneumonia/Aspiration Pneumonia (15)
Heart Disease/Cardiac Failure (3)	Old Age (5)
Pulmonary Embolism (3)	

Call for more Reviewers

If you are interesting in learning more about care for people with a learning disability or are passionate about driving service improvement there is [training](#) available to become a LeDeR local reviewer. For more information please contact us, details overleaf.



Learning Outcomes Around Reasonable Adjustments

Excellent examples of good care

- GP's using easy read invites and information for the Annual Health Check, including a pre-health check easy read questionnaire
- GP prescribing a local anaesthetic cream to numb the skin before a blood test, applied to a person's arm by carers in advance, this enabled the test to be much less distressing for the person who had communication difficulties and a sight loss
- Care home that helped someone get used to having an ultrasound scan by simulating this with a 'tool' and gel on the person's abdomen (the person had capacity to consent but would have been very anxious about the procedure and the scan may not have happened)
- Hospital offering appointments at a time of day best for the person and to meet all of the team prior to them starting dialysis
- When a hospital offers a side room for the person if this would help their stay in hospital

Areas we can improve on

- Access to health and cancer screening programmes - who supports the person especially when they are quite independent but might not fully understand the importance of the check
- Annual Health Checks which have involved a short consultation and Annual Health Check letters sent out which are not in easy read.
- Hospital staff who don't understand enough about learning disability and how to communicate with someone, they may ask a person a question and accept the answer, but the person hasn't really fully understood what they were being asked. This leads to all sorts of problems including not having pain relief, being given food that was inappropriate (for someone with diabetes)
- More needs to be done to identify and provide support to people with procedures such as blood tests, perhaps if they have a fear of needles, or with other simple investigations to help identify health issues and infections which might be missed.



National Update

The [NHS long-term plan](#), published on 7 January 2019, confirmed the NHS will continue to fund the LeDeR programme. It says that across the NHS, we will do more to ensure that all people with a learning disability, autism, or both can live happier, healthier, longer lives.

Reasonable Adjustments

What are [reasonable adjustments](#)?

Under the Equality Act 2010 public sector organisations have a legal duty to make changes in their approach or provision to ensure that services are accessible to disabled people as well as everybody else. LeDeR reviews consider where reasonable adjustments have been made to make it as easy for someone with a learning disability to use health and care services as it is for other people.

Adjustments such as:

- providing easy read appointment letters, including for Annual Health Checks
- priority appointments if someone finds it difficult waiting at their GP surgery or hospital, perhaps early or late when the surgery or hospital is quieter
- people having support to access tests and screenings according to their needs, this might include blood tests.

Public Health England has published several documents on reasonable adjustments for people with learning disabilities on a range of health issues including blood tests, cancer screening, constipation, dysphagia, obesity and weight management, this link has details www.gov.uk/government/collections/reasonable-adjustments-for-people-with-a-learning-disability

NEW

Somerset Annual Health Check video featuring Dr Amelia Randle and Kiah Durham, a Business Support Assistant at Somerset County Council: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wRIJ_3x8zc

In the Next Edition

Following on from Reasonable Adjustments, our next newsletter will include practical examples of supporting people with a learning disability and their carers to meet their health needs.

This newsletter can also be made available in Easy Read, please contact us for more information.



Best Interests

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 says that a person is unable to make their own decision if they cannot do one or more of the following four things:

- Understand the decision to be made, the information provided and the consequences
- Retain the information long enough to make the decision
- Use that information to weigh up the pros and cons of making the decision
- Communicate their decision – if for example if they are unconscious, the Act specifies that they should be treated as if they lack capacity
- And the person must also have a disorder of the brain or mind that affects their ability to make the decision

If a person has been assessed as lacking capacity for a particular decision then any action taken or decision made must be made in his or her best interests. Urgent health and medical decisions to save a person's life or prevent serious harm will be made by relevant clinicians.

Where other important decisions have to be made family and or friends must be involved, carers who know someone well should also be consulted. If there is no independent non-service related person such as a family member or friend supporting someone to make the decision being taken, then an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) MUST be appointed. Details of which decisions require an IMCA can be found in the [Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice](#).

It is also about using appropriate language and resources and giving time to help someone understand and perhaps make a decision for themselves. Remember, people who have capacity have the right to make choices that you or I may judge to be unwise. An assessment of a person's capacity must be based on their ability to make a specific decision at the time it needs to be made, and not

their ability to make decisions in general. Further resources are available at www.scie.org.uk/mca.

Dying for a Poo

Constipation can kill and is a condition which can affect up to half of all people with learning disabilities. That's why the Learning into Action working group on constipation wants to get more people talking about the problem. Unrecognised and untreated constipation in people with learning disabilities has been known to cause death. Constipation can cause pain and distress, so the effective monitoring and management of constipation in people with learning disabilities is essential to maintain their safety and well-being. More information www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/leder/news/learning-into-action-newsletters/

Local Area Contacts

The Somerset CCG Local Area Contact is:

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The [LeDeR Programme](#) contact details are:

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