

What can we do to stop people with a learning disability from dying too young?



This is the easy read summary of the paper 'Preventing people with a learning disability from dying too young'.

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Who are we?

nuffieldtrust

The **Nuffield Trust** is a charity.



The **Nuffield Trust** comes up with ideas to make healthcare services better.

What is the report about?



There is **not equal access** to health services.

People with a **learning disability** find it harder to get the support they need to stay healthy.



People with a learning disability **die about 20 years younger** than people without a learning disability.



People with a learning disability are more likely to **die from things that could be stopped**.



We think it is important to **learn about ways to improve health services** for people with a learning disability.

We want to **understand** what the national health service and local councils can do better.



In this report, we look at five key areas that could be improved for people with a learning disability:

- Overweight
- Cancer checks
- Mental health
- Annual health checks
- Finding health problems early on

What did we do?



We looked at **information** and **read documents** about the health of people with learning disabilities and how to make things better.



We **spoke to people with a learning disability** and the people who support them.



We also spoke to people who work for the **national health service**, such as managers and **healthcare staff**.



We invited a group of people to an **online workshop**.

We asked them about **why it is challenging** to help people with a learning disability **stay a healthy weight**.

We also asked them about ways to improve access to **cancer checks** and improve **annual health checks**.

1. People with a learning disability are more likely to be overweight



People who are **overweight** have a higher chance of getting heart disease, diabetes and cancer.



Being overweight can mostly be stopped from happening through healthy eating and exercise.



People with a learning disability are **more likely to be overweight** than people without a learning disability.

This is a big problem for **teenagers** and **young adults** in particular.



There are **many reasons** why people with a learning disability are **more likely to be overweight**.

These include:

- living in poorer areas so buying cheaper food that is unhealthy
- some people rely on others to buy and cook food for them
- lack of knowledge and motivation to eat healthy foods



It can be **harder** for people with a learning disability to **lose weight**.



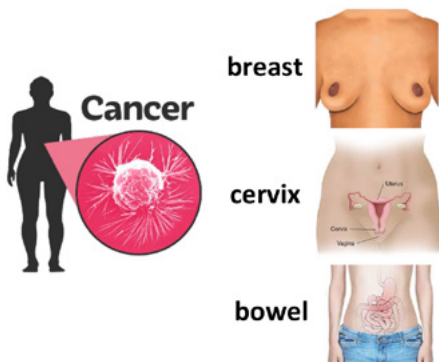
Many **weight loss groups** are **not accessible** for people with a learning disability.

2. People with a learning disability are less likely to take part in cancer checks



Cancer checks can find **early signs of cancer** in people.

This can help people **get treated earlier** which makes them **more likely to get better**.



In England, there are cancer check programmes for **cervical, breast and bowel cancer**.



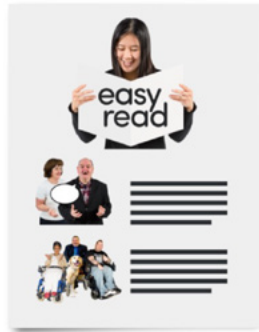
Taking part in all three cancer check programmes is **much lower** in people with a learning disability.

Over the last five years **there has not been improvement** in taking part.



Helping people with a learning disability take part in cancer checks can be **more difficult** than for other people.

People may need **extra support** from staff or carers to take part in screening.



There needs to be **good communication** to help people with a learning disability know what happens during a cancer check and why they are important.



The **NHS can make changes** to help people with a learning disability take part in cancer screening.



An example is to use easy-read invitations. These changes **do not always happen**.



One reason for this is because **not everyone with a learning disability is on the GP learning disability register**.

3. Annual health checks can be improved for people with a learning disability



Annual health checks are available to people aged 14 or over who are on the learning disability register.



They are carried out by **doctors and nurses**.



Only about **1 in 4** people with a learning disability are on the learning disability register.

If you are **not on the register** it is **harder to get an annual health check**.



During an **annual health check**, people are asked if they have any **health problems**.

Annual health checks can help **find health problems early**.



Annual health checks are **not always done well**. We need to make sure everyone gets a good health check.

4. People with a learning disability need better support for mental health problems



People with a learning disability are **more likely to have mental health problems** than other people.



People with a learning disability **do not always have access to mental health treatments** that are right for them.

Talking therapies are often used to help treat people. They are **less successful** for people with a learning disability.



It can be **harder to spot mental health problems** in people with a learning disability.

This can **stop people from getting the care they need**.



People with a learning disability are **more likely** than other people to be **given medicines** to help them with their mental health.

This is **not** always the right thing.

5. Health problems are often found later in people with a learning disability



If doctors find out about **health problems early**, they can help give people **treatments before they feel worse**.



For some diseases such as **cancer**, it is very important to find out about them early before people get sicker.

Cancer is often found in people with a learning disability **too late** when it is **more difficult to treat**.



It can be **harder** for people with a learning disability to **communicate** how they are feeling.

They might **not know** what health problems to look out for.



Doctors may find it **harder to spot health problems** in people with a learning disability.

This might be because of **communication difficulties**.



Some people with a learning disability have **many health problems** that makes **giving people the right care** more difficult.

When **health professionals work well together** this can help health problems be treated earlier.

6. Our five ideas to improve the health of people with a learning disability



The people organising healthcare in a local area should look at **learning disability registers**.

This includes people from the **national health service, councils and charities**.

The staff should **look for areas** where **not enough people** are on the learning disability register.



Staff should organise **campaigns to encourage** people to join the learning disability register.



People working for **the NHS** should do a piece of work about how to make **annual health checks better** for people with a learning disability.

The NHS should find out why health checks are **not always done well**.

The NHS should **help more people get an annual health check**.

The work should be **made available for everyone to read**, to help make annual health checks better.



A **Digital Flag** is in a person's health record. It **tells staff that a person has a learning disability**. It lets staff know **what help a person will need to for their care to go well**.



Giving **training** to staff on how to use the **Digital Flag** and helping them know what **extra support they can give** to people with a learning disability is important.



There should be **more staff who help to join up healthcare** for people with a learning disability.

These staff could be:

- key workers
- learning disability liaison nurses
- health facilitators



Joining up care is important for **people with many health problems** who need support from different services. It will help people **access the healthcare they need**.



Local councils should provide **weight loss programmes** for people with a learning disability.



Weight loss programmes can **help people lose weight**.

Some local councils have already organised free weight loss programmes.



Council staff should **look at these programmes** to see if they were successful. Weight loss programmes **could be provided by all local councils in England**.



This will help more people with a learning disability to be a healthy weight.

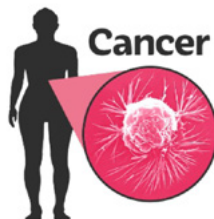
Useful words

Annual health checks



Annual health checks are for people aged 14 or over with a learning disability. They are carried out by **doctors or nurses**, who help to **find health problems early**.

Cancer



Cancer is an illness where cells in your body grow out of control and can make you very sick.

Cancer checks



You will be invited to attend a **cancer check** if you are certain age or sex. They can find early signs of cancer to help people get treated earlier.

Diabetes



Diabetes is a long-term illness where your blood sugar is too high.

Digital Flag



A **Digital Flag** is in a person's health record. It tells staff that a person has a **learning disability** and what help they need for their care to go well.

Heart disease



Heart disease is an illness that affects your heart or blood vessels.

Learning disability register



The **learning disability register** is a list of people who have a learning disability that the doctor's surgery looks after.

National Health Service (NHS)



The **NHS** is the healthcare service that everyone living in the UK can use. It is paid for by the government.

Overweight



Overweight is when you have too much body fat. It can be bad for your health.

Talking therapy



Talking therapy can help people with their **mental health**. You talk to a trained member of staff about your thoughts and feelings. You might have talking therapy if you are feeling **very sad or worried**.

For more information



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