

# Quality Time!

**A report investigating the experiences of learning disabled people when in receipt of an Annual Health Check**



July 2023

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# 1. Introduction

This report presents the findings and recommendations from a qualitative analysis of the experiences of learning disabled people when receiving an Annual Health Check. The report provides an evaluation of feedback from 11 people with learning disabilities who were interviewed to gain their views, opinions and experiences of receiving an Annual Health Check. The report seeks an audience of healthcare professionals and commissioners of primary care services and aims to achieve improvements to Annual Health Checks such as these by influencing their design and delivery.

The title of this report was chosen from the main themes arising through conversations with learning disabled people, namely that the quality of Annual Health Checks and the time they took both need to improve.

# 2. Background & Rationale

In March 2022, the trustee board of Healthwatch Manchester (HWM) met to decide upon the priority areas of focus for the oncoming year April 2022 - March 2023. Through consultation with members of the learning disabled communities and their representative on the HWM trustee board, a review of Annual Health Checks was chosen as one of these areas of focus and included in the HWM annual work plan for 2022/23. The main issue at that time was the low volume of Annual Health Checks being conducted, giving great cause for concern.

Subsequently it was reported that the Manchester Local Care Organisation had also determined this as a priority area of work and were addressing this issue through collaboration with primary care commissioning.

In March 2023 it was then reported to the HWM trustee board via the same process that although the level of Annual Health Checks had increased, the quality of the checks was often poor. It was therefore decided to include a review of Annual Health Checks using qualitative analysis in the annual work plan for 23/24 and that this would commence immediately.

# 3. Methodology

The qualitative analysis took the form of two focus groups which took place at the Manchester People First office on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Two staff members facilitated the focus groups comprising of five and six people respectively.

The staff asked five questions:

- 1. Have you had an Annual Health Check?
- 2. What did you think?
- 3. What could have been better?
- 4. Would you like to have your Annual Health Check online or in person?
- 5. What would you like to see in an Annual Health Check (AHC)?



The responses were recorded and collated for inclusion in this report.

## 4. Key Findings

### 4.1 Have you had an Annual Health Check?

20% of the respondents reported that they had not had an AHC in the last 12 months.

### 4.2 What did you think?

Some respondents felt that their AHC's were rushed and impersonal.

Other respondents reported having other negative experiences with their own AHC, reporting that these checks were not explained properly to them.

However, other respondents described their AHC's as informative and 'rather good'.

### 4.3 What could have been better?

Respondents argued that AHC letters should be provided in an EasyRead format for people who are learning disabled. This would mean that a learning disabled person can read the letter for themselves rather than relying on a family member or carer to do so. This issue was raised during the focus group when a member of MPF told HWM that a GP did not cater to their visual impairment needs.

Respondents felt as though there was a lack of wellbeing support provided.

Some respondents said that those conducting AHC's should take more time to explain what procedures they will be doing and they should provide clarity on what the checks so a learning disabled person can better understand what is happening.

Respondent's also noted that they would like a care coordinator to be present when these checks are being completed.

Some respondents felt as though the action plan/health check was quite impersonal. One individual felt stigmatised because of his weight after an assumption was made that his health issues were all related to being overweight.

Moreover, one respondent told HWM that the advice given to him felt very clinical and that only medical interventions were discussed, as opposed to emotional support.

A further theme of this question was that respondents would prefer if their AHC's were always completed by the same medical professional each time.

Finally, respondents said that GPs should be careful with the language they use. Sometimes it is very clinical with no acknowledgement that the individual in front of them has a learning disability.

#### 4.4 Would you like to have the Annual Health Checks done in person (face to face) or virtually (online)?

All of the respondents told HWM that they would prefer the Annual Health Checks to be face to face rather than be conducted online.

#### 4.5 What would you like to see in an Annual Health Check in the future?

Respondents said they would like to see their progression being recorded for example; their weight, dietary changes, meal advice and exercise they do.

Respondents also noted that the healthcare practitioner performing the AHC should take their time to explain what is happening.

Moreover, respondents noted that it should be made clear from the point of invitation that the appointment letter is specifically for an AHC and it should inform the recipient of how often these checks should take place.

Along with this, a follow up letter should be provided to help the person organise and plan a time for their next AHC.



## Conclusions

People are not all receiving their Annual Health Checks in a timely manner.

People are struggling to understand the terminology used in their Annual Health Check letters.

People report their Annual Health Checks are generally of poor quality.

Healthcare professionals conducting Annual Health Checks do not explain their actions to the people they are examining.

Annual Health Check letters do not inform the recipient of how often these checks should take place, resulting in people missing their appointments.

## Recommendations

Healthcare professionals should ensure all people within their locality are receiving their Annual Health Checks in a timely manner.

The wording of Annual Health Check letters should be produced in EasyRead format to make it easier for people to read and understand.

Annual Health Check letters sent out in the future should include both the date of the next appointment and how often these checks should be booked in.

The quality of the Annual Health Checks needs to improve at the earliest opportunity and the improvements required should be made through reading and adopting the views and experiences in this report.

Healthcare professionals conducting Annual Health Checks should consider the capacity of their patients and explain, as they conduct these checks, what procedures will happen.

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