



**For Action**

Chief Executives  
NHS Boards Primary Care Leads

**For Information**

Scottish General Practitioners Committee

14 June 2022

**Policy Enquiries to:**

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Dear Colleagues

**THE ANNUAL HEALTH CHECKS FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES  
(SCOTLAND) DIRECTIONS 2022**

**Purpose**

1. This Circular introduces [The Annual Health Check for People with Learning Disabilities \(Scotland\) Directions 2022](#) ("the Directions"), which provide a duty on Health Boards to provide Annual Health Checks to all people in Scotland aged 16 and over who have learning disabilities, using the Scottish Health Check for Adults with Learning Disabilities.

**Background**

2. The known population of people with learning disabilities from Scotland's Census 2011, is around 26,300, which is 0.52 per cent of the population. In 2019, there were 23,584 adults known to local authorities across Scotland.
3. People with learning/intellectual disabilities have some of the poorest health of any group in Scotland and die on average twenty years earlier than the rest of the population. Last year, new evidence was published by the Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory that adults with learning disabilities are twice as likely to die from preventable illnesses.
4. In randomised controlled trials, health checks have been evidenced to be clinically effective in detecting unmet clinical conditions, and in improving the management of long-term conditions - a preventative pathway towards better health. They have also been evidenced to be cost-effective, being both cheaper and more effective than standard care.

5. The NHS England Learning from Lives and Deaths People with a Learning Disability (LeDeR) 2021 report showed the likelihood of dying aged 18-49 years was 1.5 times greater for people with learning disabilities who had not had an annual health check in the previous year.
6. As of 20 May 2022, Annual Health Checks will be live in Scotland.

### **Detail**

7. An annual health check is a targeted invitation for a yearly check-up of the person with a learning disability's health. The annual health check must be undertaken by a registered nurse or a registered medical practitioner, using the Scottish Annual Health Check for Adults with Learning Disabilities. This is contained in Annex A of the Directions.
8. The Directions impose a duty on Health Boards to ensure that annual health checks are offered to individuals aged 16 and over who are known by the Boards to have a learning disability, and those aged 16 and over who identify themselves as having a learning disability (whether or not that learning disability has been formally diagnosed) and regardless of whether it is mild, moderate, severe or profound).. Health Boards must also take all reasonable steps to identify persons within their Health Board areas who are under the age of 16 and who have a learning disability, in order that an annual health check can be offered to them as soon as they attain the age of 16.
9. The expectation is that these annual health checks will have been offered by 31 March 2023.
10. The annual health checks will be provided by the Health Boards or with persons whom the Health Board enters into agreements to carry them out. The Scottish Government will write out to Boards in 6-8 weeks to determine, where they are entering into agreements with providers and what type of agreement these will be. An example LES will be made available.

### **Supplementary Information**

11. To support the health check roll out, the Scottish Government has commissioned a programme of work with NHS NES. This includes Equal Health revision (an educational framework on health equalities for people with learning disabilities) and the development of a series of learning bytes, including health needs of people with learning disabilities, communication and reasonable adjustments. This will be available on TURAS to support practitioners to carry out the annual health checks.
12. To reduce barriers for access, reasonable adjustments should be offered, such as flexible, longer appointments where appropriate.
13. Disability specific needs must be managed through the annual health checks (e.g. thyroid screening for adults with Down syndrome, blood pressure checks for adults with tuberose sclerosis, hearing assessments, accidents or repeated falls, appropriate adaptations and aids).

14. Health Boards should advertise (1) that these annual health checks are available and (2) the process for people with learning disabilities to request an annual health check. This will help to capture those individuals with learning disabilities who are not already known to the Health Board.

**Action**

15. Health Boards are asked to:

- Note the contents of this circular.
- Copy this circular to all Learning Disability Leads, Primary Care Leads and any other relevant parties.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hugh McAloon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail.

Hugh McAloon  
Interim Director  
Mental Health Directorate