

Clinical Guideline

LEARNING DISABILITIES/AUTISM: CARE PLANNING, REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND REFERRAL PATHWAY FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN OVER 16 YEARS

SETTING	University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust – Bristol sites only
FOR STAFF	All clinical staff responsible for the delivery of care to a person with a Learning Disability/Autism aged 16 years +
ISSUE	To support a smooth referral pathway to the Learning Disabilities Team

Introduction

A Learning Disability is a lifelong condition. The Department of Health (2001) defines this as: “a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence) along with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning)” which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development. The Adult Learning Disabilities Clinical Nurse Specialists provide support to adults and young people (16+ who are not known to children’s services) with a known diagnosis of Learning Disabilities and/or Autism.

Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) is the term that is used to describe a group of disorders, including Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome. The word ‘spectrum’ is used because the characteristics of the condition vary from one person to another. Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that first appears during infancy or childhood and affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how a person makes sense of the world around them. Individuals with Autism may also have Learning Disabilities. Those who have Asperger’s syndrome tend to have average, or above average intelligence, but still have difficulty making sense of the world and interacting with others.

In order to provide a seamless supportive service for the patient prior admission and during their inpatient stay, this SOP sets out the expected patient referral pathway. Staff can seek additional support for episodes of care during the referral process through to discharge. This SOP complements the current policy guidance available for clinical teams in relation to meeting the needs of people with Learning Disabilities and or Autism taking into account the additional needs people may have alongside their presenting clinical need.

The Trust has in place a flagging system called ‘Medway Alerts’. The alerts are managed and are accessible to all staff teams who have access to Medway. The aim of the alert is to inform teams that the patient has a Learning Disability and/or Autism, how to refer to the Learning Disabilities Team and guidance in relation to the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and Equality Act (2010). These identified frameworks provide staff teams with guidance around supporting people to make decisions around their health and welfare and for staff teams to identify and make reasonable adjustments when caring for this population group. By doing this it will provide better outcomes and experiences for people with Learning Disabilities, their families and carers.

Current research informs us, up to 90% of people with Learning Disabilities will have some form of

communication issue which will impact on the ability of staff to diagnose, treat and discharge them safely, with some reports suggesting that they are up to 4 times more likely to die of a preventable condition and years younger than a member of the general population (Mencap 2004; Hislop *et al* 2013).

The Learning Disability Nursing Team operate between 08:00 – 16:00 Monday – Friday (Excluding Bank Holidays). All adult patients identified to have Learning Disabilities should be referred to the Learning Disabilities Team via the Medway service order referral system

Monitoring Standards

Process	Tool	Responsibility	Review of results & development of action plan	Monitoring action plan	Sharing of results
Process referrals	Via Medway service order	The Adult Learning Disabilities Team	The Adult Learning Disabilities Team with Line Manager	Add to Adult Learning Disabilities work plan	Adult Safeguarding Team – Steering group
	Check eligibility (GP community partners)	The Adult Learning Disabilities Team	Liaise with clinical teams		
	Add Patient to Clinical alerts	The Adult Learning Disabilities Team	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Add alert on Medway	The Adult Learning Disabilities Team	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Medway clinical notes	The Adult Learning Disabilities Team	Patients referred to the Learning Disabilities Team will be reviewed and contributions will be made to care plan as required throughout inpatient stay to discharge	Ongoing review	Learning disabilities team will record input in the patients' medical notes and Medway clinical notes.

Table A

REFERENCES	Mencap 2004; Hislop <i>et al</i> 2013 Department of Health (2001)
RELATED DOCUMENTS AND PAGES	Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder Policy
AUTHORISING BODY	Learning Disability Steering Group
SAFETY	None
QUERIES AND CONTACT	Learning Disability Team

Appendix A – Referral flow chart: Patient is admitted to a clinical area with a known or possible Learning Disability and/or Autism.

Complete a Medway Service Order (Referral) prior to outpatient appointment (TCI) or within 48 hours following admission. Referral process will identify known Reasonable Adjustments. Once completed print and place in notes, this will be used in line with their health care plan. Please follow process below.

Log onto Medway, select the patient, enter the 'Clinical Info' tab and go to 'Service Orders' and 'Place Order'



Select the Adult Learning Disabilities and/or Autism Liaison Team Order and then follow the on-screen instructions



The Learning Disabilities Team will review appropriate referrals for patients within Emergency Department, Inpatient and Outpatient departments.
The Learning Disabilities Team and clinical services will offer support to patients at the age of 16 in relation to any new conditions which are unknown to paediatric services

Does the patient have a formal diagnosis of Learning Disabilities and/or Autism?

Yes



Clinical Staff For patients with limited communication complete a Hospital Passport (this can be printed and given to a family/ carer to complete and return to clinical area. For all supporting documentation follow link:

<http://connect/governanceandquality/Safeguarding/LearnDis/Pages/HospitalPassport.aspx>



No



Learning Disabilities Team will advise the referrer to consider other services within the organisation.

Case closed

Learning Disabilities Team will support clinical areas to support patient, whilst in Trust care by assisting planned admission/attendance, and discharge planning

The Learning Disabilities Team will validate and advise staff on Reasonable Adjustments in line with the Equality Act (2010) and or the Mental Capacity Act (2005)



Patient discharged safely from UHBW. Follow on/follow up care handed over to appropriate Specialist Community Teams.
Case closed