

Improving Maternity Services for Women with a Learning Disability



The North East & Cumbria Learning Disability Network, Northern Maternity Network and North East North Cumbria Local Maternity and Neonatal System have come together to develop the Learning Disability Maternity Diamond Standards. These are a regional set of reasonably adjusted maternity care pathways to support expectant mothers with a learning disability, a supporting workforce education package for maternity services and a range of accessible resources to support pregnant women with a learning disability.

The Learning Disability Maternity Diamond Standards have been made available as a resource which can be adopted and localised for areas across the North East North Cumbria.

The pathways look at:

- Antenatal Care
- Labour
- Post-natal Care (up to 10 days)

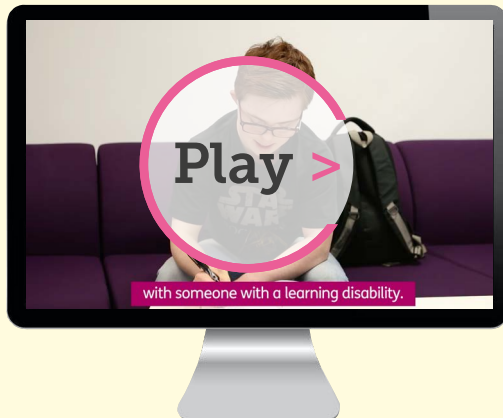
The aim of this work is to:

- Improve experiences of parents with a learning disability when accessing maternity care
- Improve communication for parents with a learning disability when using maternity services
- Improve use of reasonable adjustments in maternity services for parents with a learning disability
- Improve identification of parents with a learning disability when accessing maternity services
- Promote seamless care and disparity of service

We worked with Community Voluntary Sector Organisations and spoke with parents with a learning disability across North East North Cumbria. They told us what was important to them and this included:

- Listen to us and the people who support us
- Be patient sometimes we need more time or support when we are communicating with you or to process information
- Use plain English and be clear when explaining things but don't talk down to us
- Take the time to help us understand you and for you to understand us
- Respect us treat us how you would treat parents without a learning disability
- Provide us with information in a way we understand this might be easy read, pictures or using the teach back method

Reasonable Adjustments



Play the Treat Me Well Reasonable Adjustment film

<https://youtu.be/DMV06K1oanA>

Under the Equality Act 2010, all disabled people have the right to reasonable adjustments when using public services, including healthcare. These adjustments remove barriers that disabled people would otherwise face in accessing these services.

Making reasonable adjustments means ensuring disabled people have equal access to good quality healthcare. Reasonable adjustments can be simple changes made by one healthcare professional, or they can be more complex and need multiple teams to work together.

Making reasonable adjustments can mean removing barriers that people with a learning disability face, or providing something extra for someone with a learning disability to enable them to access the healthcare they need. When making reasonable adjustments it is also important that you record and share this information in clinical systems.

The North East and Cumbria Learning Disability Network are leading the NENC ICB reasonable adjustments flag project. There is a requirement by 2023/24 a digital flag will be available across health and care to identify a persons reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act. More information about this work can be found at www.neclldnetwork.co.uk/work-programmes/digital

We have also developed the Reasonable Adjustment Campaign to raise awareness of reasonable adjustments across health and care and people with a learning disability and their families. More information and resources can be found at www.neclldnetwork.co.uk/work-programmes/reasonbaleadjustments

Reasonable Adjustments

Here are the Mencap 'Treat Me Well' top 10 reasonable adjustments:

1. Speak clearly and use simple words It is really important not to make assumptions that someone has understood information they have been given.
2. Take your time. People with a learning disability may need a bit longer than other patients to be able to understand information they are given and to make themselves understood. Just ten extra minutes can make a big difference to many people.
3. Be flexible with appointment times. Many people with a learning disability will find it easier coming to hospital when it is quieter, so an appointment at the very beginning or very end of the day might make their appointment go more smoothly. They may also need an appointment at a time when their supporter is able to accompany them.
4. Make sure people can get into and around the hospital. This includes ensuring there are no physical barriers for people using wheelchairs or with mobility issues, but also making sure signs in the hospital are as easy to understand as possible.
5. Provide a quiet place to wait. Hospitals are often busy, noisy places and this can be overwhelming for many people with a learning disability. Having a quiet place to wait can prevent people getting anxious and having to leave the hospital. Many people also find waiting a long time very difficult.
6. Listen to your learning disability liaison nurse. Most hospitals have learning disability liaison nurses who know lots about reasonable adjustments and can help you to support your patient. Ask your learning disability nurse if you know you will be seeing a patient with a learning disability.
7. Use the Maternity Health and Care Passport. This is a patient-held, personalised record of what women with a learning disability need to support them through their maternity journey, reading them will make your job a lot easier!
8. Provide written information in Easy Read format. This means people are much more likely to read and understand information about their appointments, procedures and results. This is also a requirement of the NHS's own Accessible Information Standard.
9. Always ask the person what they need. Reasonable adjustments are about what the person in front of you needs and they know that better than anyone and any family or carers with them and do your best to provide the support they need. Make sure you meet the need, record it and share it with others.
10. To find out more information please visit the Mencap Treat Me Well campaign.
[Treat Me Well: Campaign resources | Mencap](#)

Mental Capacity Act



Play the Mental Capacity Act & Best Interest film

<https://youtu.be/tsthYJV0yig>

The 'Mental Capacity Act' is an important law for people with a learning disability. It protects rights to help people to make their own choices. Where they are not able to make their own decision, the Mental Capacity Act says a decision must be made that is in their 'best interests'.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 is a law that protects vulnerable people over the age of 16 around decision-making. It says that: Every adult, whatever their disability, has the right to make their own decisions wherever possible. People should always support a person to make their own decisions if they can. This might mean giving them information in a format that they can understand (for example this might be easy read information for a person with a learning disability) or explaining something in a different way. But if a decision is too big or complicated for a person to make, even with appropriate information and support, then people supporting them must make a 'best interests' decision for them.

The Mental Capacity Act: 5 main principles

1. Always assume the person is able to make the decision until you have proof they are not.
2. Try everything possible to support the person make the decision themselves.
3. Do not assume the person does not have capacity to make a decision just because they make a decision that you think is unwise or wrong.
4. If you make a decision for someone who cannot make it themselves, the decision must always be in their best interests & well documented.
5. Any decisions, treatment or care for someone who lacks capacity must always follow the path that is the least restrictive of their basic rights and freedoms.
6. It's also important to remember that a person may have capacity for some decisions but not others, or they may not have capacity right now but may regain it in the future with support. This means all capacity decisions should be regularly reviewed to make sure they still reflect the person's ability to make decisions.

Resources

North East North Cumbria Maternity Easy Read Information Leaflets
[Easy Read Maternity Resources « Learning Disability Network \(neclnetwork.co.uk\)](#)

North East North Cumbria Maternity Easy Read Passport
[Easy Read Maternity Passport & Birth Plan « Learning Disability Network \(neclnetwork.co.uk\)](#)

North East North Cumbria Maternity Easy Read Birth Plan
[Easy Read Maternity Passport & Birth Plan « Learning Disability Network \(neclnetwork.co.uk\)](#)

North East & North Cumbria Learning Disability Maternity Diamond Standard Pathways and Workforce Education
[Learning Disability Maternity Diamond Standards \(Pathways & Workforce Education\) « Learning Disability Network \(neclnetwork.co.uk\)](#)

Reasonable Adjustment Campaign
www.neclnetwork.co.uk/work-programmes/reasonableadjustments

Reasonable Adjustment Digital Flag
www.neclnetwork.co.uk/work-programmes/digital

Prevention of Adult Not Brought Strategy
www.neclnetwork.co.uk/work-programmes/reasonableadjustments/panb

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