

## Barriers and things that help people with learning disabilities and or autism to use primary health care



### We already know

People with learning disabilities or autism or both face health inequalities.

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### The problem



People with learning disabilities or autism or both often do not have their health needs met.

Their views and experiences are often not heard.

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### What we did



We explored what people with learning disabilities or autism or both said were the barriers and the things that helped to get good **primary health care**.

**Primary health care** means local GPs surgeries and dentists.

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## How did we do this

We looked at what has been studied and written about this around the world.

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## What we found

We found 63 studies.

Six main themes came out from these studies.

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## Themes

### Training

People with learning disabilities or autism or both should be involved in running training of healthcare staff.

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Healthcare staff know this training is very important.

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This training is not always there for staff.

This is because of problems like not having enough time for staff training or people with the right knowledge to run the training.

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## Knowledge and awareness

Some healthcare providers might not understand how to support people with learning disabilities and or autism.

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This might mean there are poor attitudes to people with learning disabilities or autism or both.

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A friendly attitude from health staff helps people to access health services and talk about their health worries.

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Communicate

## Communication

Communication is a big issue for people.

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Some people are anxious when they are not listened to.

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Poor communication stops people accessing healthcare.

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Healthcare staff often talk to a person's family members or support workers instead of talking to them.

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Some family members or support workers do not let the person speak for themselves.

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People find it hard to get information they can understand about their health.

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Things that help some people communicate include

- easy read information
  - not speaking face to face to the person
  - Using the telephone
  - Not giving too much information at once
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Being able to see the same staff member each time is helpful for some people.

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Healthcare staff agree that this is helpful so they can understand the person's needs and communicate better.

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Treating people with dignity and respect helps to build good relationships.

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It is important that health and social care staff work well together.

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## Fear and embarrassment

Some people with learning disabilities or autism or both are afraid or embarrassed to use health services.

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They might be afraid of things like



- Being judged about their life and choices
  - Blood tests or needles
  - Having checks for cancer
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Some people can be embarrassed by having physical checkups.

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The waiting and treatment rooms can be frightening or upsetting for some people.



Things that could help people feel less afraid or embarrassed include

- Easy read information
- Models
- Videos
- Photos
- Showing people what will happen before they do it.



**Involvement in health decisions**



People may not be supported to make decisions about their health.



People feel empowered when they are involved in their own health.



Sharing information makes people feel valued and less likely to be afraid.

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People want person and family centred services that can in different ways to meet their needs.

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### Time

Long waiting times to see health staff are a barrier

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Short appointments can also be a barrier

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People with learning disabilities or autism or both often need extra time for good communication.

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Health staff often understand this need but may find it difficult to give the extra time needed.

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## Conclusions

This is the first review looking at barriers and things that help people with learning disabilities or autism or both to access primary health services.

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We found that policy and guidance is right to share the need for person centred services.

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Services should make reasonable adjustments to help people access them.

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Health staff face barriers themselves at work. They still have a really important part in stopping health inequalities faced by people with learning disabilities or autism or both.

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Full article:

**Barriers and facilitators to primary health care for people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism: an integrative review.**

By Alison Doherty, Helen Atherton, Paul Boland, Richard Hastings, Lucy Hives, Kerry Hood, Lynn James-Jenkinson, Ralph Leavey, Elizabeth Randell, Janet Reed, Laurence Taggart, Neil Wilson, Umesh Chauhan

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