

How medicines to treat mental health problems are used for people with learning disabilities



The Department of Health's Transforming Care document looks at things which needed to be changed as a result of the abuse of people with learning disabilities at Winterbourne View.



One of the things which Transforming care looked at was the use of medicines used on people with a learning disability. Some of these medicines that were being used are usually used to treat people who have mental health problems.



NHS England feels that it is important for people who have a learning disability and their carers to understand about the medication they are taking, and the reasons they are taking the medication, and that their feelings are taken into account.



Medication taken should be checked regularly to make sure that it is right for the person.



Sometimes medication used for people with mental health problems can help people who have learning disabilities. For example, some people have seizures and these sorts of medication can help with these.

When these sorts of medications are used we need to make sure that they do not cause any side effects. **A side effect** is something which is harmful or unpleasant to someone taking the medication.

Some of the side effects from using these sort of medications can be:



- Difficulty in moving or awkward movements.
- Being tired or sleepy
- Putting on weight
- Problems such as blurred eyesight or a dry mouth



Sometimes medication used for mental health problems have been used to control a person's behaviour. These work by calming a person down and limiting how much and how quickly a person can move.



Sometimes these medications have been used when there are better ways to support a person.



NHS England gathered together carers, health professionals and people who make policies to look at how often medication for mental health problems are used for people with a learning disability and whether these medications are being used in the right way.



As part of this work:

Public Health England looked at how often these medications are being given to people with learning disabilities, and are to publish a report on this.



New ways of working were tested to improve quality in the National Health Service (NHS) in some areas. In these areas there were found to be some very good care being given to people with learning disabilities.

These included a lot of staff working together to make things better for people.



Some things which needed to be done better were making sure that patients and carers understood what medication they were getting and how this was helping to keep them healthy



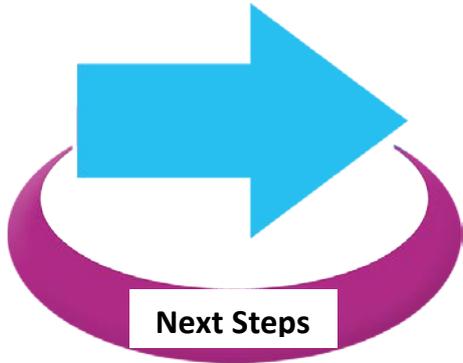
The Care Quality Commission looked at information given by Doctors who give second opinions. In some cases a **second opinion** is needed to check a person's medication and if it needs to be continued.



This Doctor will speak to the person, and the people who are looking after the person and will make a decision about whether the treatment needs to be changed.



The work done by NHS England showed that some people were being given medication for mental health problems when they did not need to be.



Next Steps



We will look at how often people are being given medication for mental health problems when they do not need to be



We will make sure that there are better ways to support people rather than giving them medication



We are bringing together all professionals who are involved in looking after people with learning disabilities to look at improving the way we use medication



We will be giving updates on this work, and need help from people with learning disabilities and their carers to do this



We have advice for people with learning disabilities and their carers who may be worried about the medication the person with a learning disability is taking.



You can find the advice on the [NHS England website](#).



Produced by Sunderland People First