A top tips guide to understanding the classification of a learning disability, identification tools and how to use them in primary care.

Background

Patients with learning disabilities are dying prematurely and Annual Health Checks (AHCs), flu vaccinations, screening for cancer and reasonable adjustments have all been shown to help prevent this. To accurately identify and reach this population it is important that the register is accurate and up to date. It is also known that registers are not picking up the true prevalence, as there seems to be discrepancy between agencies including secondary care, mental health trusts, education and local authority. One reason for this is the difference in definitions used. The CCG wants to support you in improving the quality of the registers you hold.

Definition of a Learning Disability

The criteria of a Learning Disability diagnosis include:

- A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with
- A reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning)

Which started before adulthood (under the age of 18), with lasting effect on development

The definition encompasses people with a broad range of disabilities and an IQ of less than 70 in itself should not be used to identify someone as not having a learning disability.

The definition **does not** include individuals that:

- Have a learning difficulty e.g. Specific learning difficulties with learning such as dyslexia, ADHD, sensory impairment.
- Have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder alone where there is no evidence to suggest that a learning disability is also present.

The process and tools

There are four elements to this quality improvement, some of which your practice may already have in place:

Practice Process:

- Identify a clinical lead for learning disabilities within your practice
- Develop a core practice Learning Disabilities team consisting of a lead administrator, lead GP and Lead Practice Nurse
- Establish regular meetings to review progress, agree what's going well and what changes may be needed.

- Ensure the DCS Annual Health Check template is available to all clinicians performing Annual Health Checks

Review and check your existing Register :

- Review your existing learning disability register ensuring it includes all ages
- Work out a prevalence figure based on your practice population in percentage format
- Compare with the national prevalence data (what is the discrepancy) - you may already have this within your performance report from NECS.

Cleanse the existing register

- Review each individual patient on the register and verify the clinical diagnosis and code – see list in national guidance document.
- If there are no matching clinical codes in the notes, you may consider using the screening tool 'Leeds Inclusion Tool', before removing the patient from the register.

Set up search for new cases

- Search your patient population for EHCP (Educational Health Care Plans) and once a cohort is identified check to see if any learning disabilities identified within clinical records. As above autism is not a learning disability.
- Search your patient population for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and check this cohort to see if any learning disabilities identified. As above autism is not a learning disability.

Screening tool for learning disabilities

- Ask your clinical and administrative staff who they know about, as some people with Learning Disabilities may not be coded
- Consider using a screening tool - find attached the Leeds Inclusion Tool to assist the Lead GP in case finding. The Inclusion Tool provides a set of questions to aid thinking about whether the person might have a learning disability and benefit from inclusion on the Learning Disability Register. Working through the inclusion tool will provide evidence and information that can be used to make sounds clinical judgement.
- If you believe that the patient should be included on the learning disability register then please use the code for "on learning disability register" that is correct for your system.

In 2019/ 2020 – practices have already been contacted with the improving identification document that advises these two steps:

Step 1: Review and update the register to ensure that all patients with a clinical diagnosis associated with a learning disability are invited for a flu vaccination and a learning disability health check.

Step 2: Identify patients with conditions who may also have a learning disability, assess whether the patient should be added to the learning disability register and be offered a flu vaccination and annual learning disability health check.

If you need any further advice or support with updating your registers and the AHC process please contact the Co Durham Health Facilitation Team; by emailing Michaela.Hopps@nhs.net or telephone 07788916965 or Clinical Lead for learning disabilities at your CCG. Any referral queries should be directed to Social Care Direct on 03000267979.