

 Kingston GP Chambers Kingston Training Hub Clinical Services Practice Support Services Kingston Education Centre	Support of patients with disabilities		Reviewed	October 2024
	Adopted	May 2024	Revised	Yes
			Next review	October 2026

Support of patients with disabilities, communication support needs and autism

Kingston GP Chambers is committed to providing accessible and inclusive healthcare services to all patients, including those with disabilities. This Policy outlines our commitment to supporting patients with disabilities in navigating our premises and accessing the care and treatment they require.

We recognise and respect the diversity of our patient population and are committed to promoting equality and eliminating discrimination against individuals with disabilities and autism.

Training

All staff are required to complete the mandatory Oliver McGowan training in learning disability and autism to the appropriate level. Tier one of this training is accessible through Bluestream with a link to the ELFH training. Procurement of tier two training is currently under review.

Accessibility of Premises

We strive to ensure our premises are accessible to patients with disabilities, including those with mobility impairments, sensory impairments, and cognitive disabilities.

We have completed an external disability access audit through Bison in May 2024 and will implement the actions where possible and necessary, consider alternate mitigation where appropriate or explain instances where actions are not considered necessary or proportionate.

The disability access arrangements will be reviewed when there is a structural change to the premises, changes to the use of premises that will impact those with disabilities, autism or mobility difficulties or changes to legislation and best practice. Feedback from patients with disabilities, including those received verbally or through the complaints process, will also be used to make alterations to this process where appropriate. Actions from learning events may also feed into any changes made to this policy.

Our premises are located on the Ground Floor of CI Tower. Entrance to the premises is level. While the door to the entrance is a heavy fire door, patients with mobility difficulties can call reception using the call button next to the door. Reception staff, located approximately 10 meters away from the door can then assist patients to enter the premises. There is designated disabled parking outside of the premises. The premises have adequate space to accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility aids. We provide accessible toilets equipped with grab rails.

Signage within our premises is clear, easy to read.

The waiting areas and consultation rooms are spacious and designed to accommodate patients with mobility aids or assistance animals and the corridors and toilets were considered sufficient by Bison to accommodate these patients.

Assistance and Support:

Our staff are trained to provide appropriate assistance and support to patients with disabilities in navigating our premises and accessing healthcare services.

Patients are encouraged to communicate their specific needs and preferences to our staff, who will endeavour to accommodate them to the best of our ability.

Staff will offer assistance with scheduling appointments for patients with communication or cognitive disabilities.

Accessible Communication:

We strive to ensure that communication with patients with disabilities is accessible and effective and complies with the Accessible Information Standard which requires staff to:

- Identify: staff should be proactive in asking patients if they require additional support where appropriate.
- Record: Staff should record any needs in the patient's records
- Flag: staff should flag these needs to other staff working in the service who are involved in the patient journey.
- Share: staff should share any identified needs with the patient's own GP practice, particularly if details of support needs or reasonable adjustments are not clearly visible in the patient's record. Care should also be made by any of our services who refer patients externally, Referral information should clearly highlight any additional support or adjustments needed.
- Meet: staff should endeavour to meet the specific needs of the patient. If any member of staff is unsure how to meet a patient's needs, they should highlight this first to the service manager. If the service manager does not know how to meet the patient's needs this should be raised with Adam O'Donnell and/or Amar Gandavadi.

We have a hearing loop in reception to support those patients who are hard of hearing.

Our staff communicate clearly and respectfully with patients with hearing impairments, or sign language interpreters where necessary.

Reasonable Adjustments:

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to our services, policies, and procedures to accommodate the needs of patients with disabilities.

Patients are encouraged to inform us of any specific requirements or adjustments they may need to access our services, and we will endeavour to implement them where

reasonable and feasible. If any member of staff is unsure whether a reasonable adjustment can be accommodated they should highlight this first to the service manager who can support them. If the service manager is unsure how to accommodate any requested adjustment, this should be raised with Adam O'Donnell and/or Amar Gandavadi.

Identification of additional support needs and reasonable adjustments

Given the nature of the services operated by Kingston GP Chambers and the typically infrequent contact we have with patients, it is felt that we are not best placed to amend patient records with alerts to highlight additional needs as this would be more appropriately done by the patient's own GP practice. As a result, staff should ensure that any additional support or reasonable adjustments are highlighted within the reports sent to the patient's own practice following consultations at our services.

Additional considerations for patients with learning disabilities and autism

This policy aims to implement the learning from the Oliver McGowan training on learning disability and autism into a practical policy that staff follow to ensure our services provide safe and effective care and treatment to patients with learning disabilities and autism. Therefore, staff should be mindful of the following:

Stopping the over medication of people with learning disabilities (STOMP):

STOMP stands for stopping over medication of people with a learning disability, autism, or both using psychotropic medicines. It's a national project involving various organisations working to reduce the inappropriate use of these medications. Psychotropic medicines affect brain function and include drugs for psychosis, depression, anxiety, sleep problems, and epilepsy. People with a learning disability or autism are more likely to receive these medicines, even when not medically necessary. While these medications can be helpful for some, alternative approaches should be considered to minimise their use.

Identification of people with learning disabilities and autism: How patients with learning disabilities and autism wish to be identified differs depending on the individual. Staff should take the time to ask patients how they wish to be identified. For example, some may wish to be referred to as an autistic person, others as a person with autism.

Ask, listen, do: Ask Listen Do is a framework developed by NHS England to support healthcare providers in improving the experiences of patients with learning disabilities or autism. It emphasises three key principles: asking about their needs and preferences, listening to their feedback and concerns, and taking appropriate action to address any issues or barriers they may encounter in accessing healthcare services. Here's a breakdown of each component:

Ask: Kingston GP Chambers staff are encouraged to proactively ask patients with learning disabilities or autism about their specific needs, preferences, and any adjustments they may require to access and receive healthcare services comfortably.

This involves open communication and creating a welcoming environment where patients feel empowered to express their needs.

Listen: Kingston GP Chambers staff must actively listen to the feedback, concerns, and experiences shared by patients with learning disabilities or autism. This includes paying attention to verbal and non-verbal cues, respecting their communication style, and acknowledging their perspectives. By listening attentively, staff can gain valuable insights into potential barriers or challenges faced by these patients.

Do: Taking appropriate action based on the information gathered from asking and listening is crucial. This involves implementing reasonable adjustments, accommodations, and support measures to address the specific needs and preferences of patients with learning disabilities or autism. Kingston GP Chambers staff should work collaboratively with patients, their families, and relevant support networks to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to improve their healthcare experiences.

Review of care plans: Reviewing care plans for patients with learning disabilities or autism is of paramount importance. These individuals often require specialised and tailored support to address their unique needs, preferences, and challenges.

Staff working at Kingston GP Chambers should, where possible, review the care plans of these patients to ensure care and treatment provided takes account of the guidance and specific needs and adjustments documented.

Staff should also consider the effectiveness of current interventions, any changes or developments in the patient's condition or circumstances and make recommendations for adjustments to the care plan where appropriate.

Any recommended changes to the patient's care plan following a consultation at one of our services should be communicated to the patient's practice through the standard reporting process following the consultation.

In addition to the care plan patients with a learning disability or autism should ask the patient if they have a health passport. Where available this should be considered as part of any consultation.

Important legislative considerations

Staff should be mindful of key elements of legislation that are particularly relevant to patients with learning disabilities and autism:

Care Act 2014: This action places obligations on healthcare providers when interacting with patients with learning disabilities and autism. Staff should be familiar with the main tenants of the act including:

Promotion of Well-being: The Care Act places a strong emphasis on promoting the well-being of individuals with care and support needs, including those with learning disabilities and autism.

Person-Centered Care and Support Planning: The Act emphasises the importance of person-centered care and support planning, ensuring that individuals with learning disabilities and autism have a central role in decisions about their care.

Prevention and Early Intervention: The Act promotes a preventive approach to care and support, aiming to intervene early to prevent or delay the need for more intensive support in the future. This is particularly relevant for individuals with learning disabilities and autism, as early identification and intervention can have significant positive outcomes.

Safeguarding: The Act strengthens safeguarding measures to protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect, including those with learning disabilities and autism.

Integration of Health and Social Care: The Care Act encourages greater integration and collaboration between health and social care services to provide more coordinated and seamless support for individuals with complex needs, including learning disabilities and autism. This integrated approach aims to improve the continuity of care and outcomes for individuals by ensuring that their health and social care needs are effectively addressed. With this in mind, staff should highlight instances where they believe patients who require continuity of care have been inappropriately referred to Kingston GP Chambers services. This should be raised initially with the service manager and escalated to the Adam O'Donnell and Amar Gandavadi if necessary, particularly if this is a consistent issue arising from a specific practice, clinicians or other healthcare organisation.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005: This act plays a crucial role in safeguarding the rights and interests of people with learning disabilities and autism, particularly concerning decision-making and care provision. Staff should pay particular attention to the following key elements of the act when interacting with patients who have learning disability and autism:

Decision-making Capacity: The MCA provides a legal framework for assessing and determining an individual's capacity to make decisions about their care and treatment. This is particularly relevant for people with learning disabilities and autism who may have fluctuating or impaired decision-making capacity. The Act emphasises the importance of supporting individuals to make their own decisions whenever possible and making decisions in their best interests when they lack capacity. Both clinical and non clinical staff receive training on the Mental Capacity Act as part of Kingston GP Chamber's programme of mandatory training.

Best Interests Decision-making: When individuals with learning disabilities or autism lack the capacity to make specific decisions, the MCA requires that decisions be made in their best interests. This involves considering their wishes, feelings, beliefs, and values, as well as consulting with relevant parties, such as family members, carers, and other health and social care professionals. The Act aims to ensure that decisions about their care and treatment are made with their well-being and preferences in mind.

Advance Care Planning: The MCA allows individuals to make advance decisions or appoint a trusted person (known as a Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Welfare) to make decisions on their behalf if they lose capacity in the future. This is particularly relevant for people with learning disabilities and autism who may wish to plan ahead for their future care and treatment preferences.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults: The MCA complements existing safeguarding measures to protect vulnerable adults, including those with learning disabilities and autism, from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It requires professionals and carers to act in the best interests of individuals and report any concerns about their welfare to the appropriate authorities. Staff should refer to Kingston GP Chamber's safeguarding policy for further information including information around the process for reporting safeguarding concerns both internally and externally.

The Equality Act 2010: This act places duties on providers of health and social care to ensure that individuals with learning disabilities and autism receive fair and equitable treatment. Staff should be mindful of the following key components of the act that are not explicitly covered elsewhere in this policy:

Prohibition of Discrimination: The Act prohibits direct and indirect discrimination against individuals with learning disabilities and autism. This means that healthcare and social care providers must not treat these individuals less favourably than others because of their disability. Discrimination can include refusing access to services, providing a lower standard of care, or imposing unreasonable barriers to access.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED): Public sector organisations, including NHS providers, have a specific duty under the Equality Act known as the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This duty requires them to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with disabilities and autism. This means that healthcare and social care providers must actively work to address inequalities and promote inclusivity in their services.

Compliance and Review:

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. Periodic updates will be made in line with changes to legislation and best practice related to the support and provision of healthcare for patients with disabilities and autism.