



## Health screening for adults with Learning Disabilities.

Devon Link Up, in conjunction with Healthwatch Devon was asked to seek information from people with learning disabilities about their experiences of health screening.

The nature of Health Screening can be a personal and difficult subject to discuss, particularly in mixed group settings so it was decided to start with conversations about annual health checks and from the outcome of this to then focus on those individuals who had been for screening and their experience. 86 people attended the various groups from across the Devon County Council area.

The majority of group members have regular contact with their GP surgery and attended an annual health check. The majority did not regularly see the same Doctor but nobody expressed any concerns about this or had any complaints about the way they were treated.

The annual health check form was used as an aid to prompt discussion and it was evident that very few people were asked about their smoking or drinking habits and nobody said that they had been asked about any sexual relationships. It is not possible to state that this is applicable to everyone as some people were unable to recall what they were asked, however, it would be an area for further investigation, particularly as it can be very relevant to further discussion and explanation about the need for screening.

The majority of people had not been to any screening and did not know if they had ever been sent a request to attend. Only seven people gave information about screening and their comments are outlined overleaf.

The following information was gathered from those who said they had been for screening.

### Female 26-50

Breast screening

*"I went to the mobile van. It wasn't very pleasant. The staff were helpful, but it wasn't very nice to have it done. It hurt.*

*It's good for women to go.*

*I would go again as it's important".*

Smear test

*"I don't like it. I've been, but I don't like it. I don't like it twisting to open. I've got a letter at home, but I'm not going.*

*If there was an easier way (to have the test done), I would go".*

### Female 51-65

Breast screening

*"It was alright. I think everyone should go.*

*It's a good thing to be checked"*

### Female aged 26-50

Smear test

*"I went once for a smear. It didn't work. I didn't like it. The metal bit really hurt me. I don't go any more.*

*I'm not sure if I would go again.*

*I would go if it didn't hurt so much."*

### Female aged 26-50

Smear Test

*"I've been. My Mum opened the letter and made the appointment.*

*The nurse was very kind. She explained everything as she did it.*

*I felt very apprehensive, nervous and jittery, but it was fine. I think it's good to go. It's good to prevent it (cancer)".*

### Female - aged 51-65

Breast screening

*"I've been, but I wouldn't go again. I went to the mobile van."*

Bowel screening -

*"I had a letter. I don't want to do it".*

Only two gentlemen talked about their experiences and both said that it was ok. Both had attended appointments with support staff. They gave no further information.

Due to a variety of factors it was not possible to give this consultation as much time as would be preferable considering the nature of the conversations involved. It is clear that although general health checks are undertaken there are relevant questions that are being overlooked and these clearly link to the importance of the screening programme. Although group members do not appear to be being offered the opportunity to attend screening there may also be influences in relation to information gatekeeping which could be examined as well as the role of GP's in identifying those who may be at greater risk due to lifestyle choices.

Devon Link Up is a delivery partner of Healthwatch Devon and works to give people with Learning Disabilities in Devon a real Voice and Choice about things that are important in their lives.

Jo Morgan  
Chief Officer  
Devon Link Up  
07808053992