BETTER ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

People with learning disabilities in Rotherham are benefiting from a range of new and extended services that have been introduced in Rotherham over the last year.

NHS Rotherham has introduced a number of developments that will improve access to health services for people with learning disabilities.

Everyone with a learning disability now has access to an annual health check with their GP and GP and hospital records have been marked (with the person’s permission) so that patients can be easily identified and arrangements can be made to provide them with extra support when they come for appointments or need to go into hospital. Information is also being provided for people with learning disabilities and for family carers in a way that they can understand for example ‘easy-read’ leaflets with pictures, or on DVD.

Learning disability awareness training has taken place with over 350 front line health care staff, including GP practice, hospital and community health service staff. The training provides them with information to help them to assess how their work can affect patients with learning disabilities. Speakup Self Advocacy, a group run in Rotherham by and for people with learning disabilities, has been a key partner in delivering this training along with the Rotherham Learning Disability Service.

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A DVD has been commissioned by NHS Rotherham which is specifically designed to help people with learning disabilities in choices for end of life care, with the help of Macmillan Cancer Trust. A new Hospital Communication Book has been developed and this guide will also be used by health professionals in Primary Care and may also be helpful for with patients who are suffering with illnesses such as dementia and people who do not have English as a first language.

Alice Kilner, Joint Commissioning Manager for Learning Disabilities and Mental Health at NHS Rotherham, said: “We have made significant progress in improving health services for this very vulnerable group of people within Rotherham. Patients are now actively referred into other services that may benefit their special needs and many more staff are now better trained in dealing with those specific needs.”

In March, over 40 people attended a Big Health Day to give their views on health services in Rotherham and to raise awareness of the new developments in accessing health services for people with learning disabilities.

Ends

Note to Editors:

1. NHS Rotherham leads the borough’s health service by investing £420 million of your money into local health services. Our aim is Better Health and Better Lives for everyone in Rotherham. NHS Rotherham pays for the services provided by all the health services in the Borough, including all GPs, dentists, and pharmacists, community health services, Rotherham Hospital and Rotherham’s mental health services.

2. NHS Rotherham also provides a range of community health services through Rotherham Community Health Services, including Health Visiting, District Nursing, Podiatry and Contraception and Sexual Health services.

3. Our vision for the next five years is for:
   * Babies to be born healthy and have the best start in life
   * Children and young people to be fit and active
   * Quick and convenient access to excellent services for all
   * People with long term conditions will be supported to manage their health and access services
   * Easy access to services for people with mental health problems
   * People to be able to choose where they die

4. NHS Rotherham is still legally a Primary Care Trust.

For further information please contact Fiona Topliss, Head of Communications on 01709 308989 or 07540 671520 or email fiona.topliss@rotherham.nhs.uk