

Ministear airson Cùram Sòisealta agus Sunnd Inntinn
Tom Arthur BPA



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30 January 2026

Dear Convener

Health checks for people with learning disabilities

Thank you for your letter of 5 January 2026 requesting an update on the delivery of annual health checks for people aged sixteen and over with learning disabilities.

Annual health checks aim to address longstanding health inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities, improving life expectancy and overall health and wellbeing. They save lives and provide vital opportunities for prevention, early intervention, treatment and support, aligning with Scottish Government's Population Health Framework, Service Delivery Framework and Disability Equality Plan.

In line with earlier UK and international studies, the evidence collected to date on implementation of annual health checks in Scotland shows that they lead to sustained improvements in health outcomes and contribute to reduced health inequalities, addressing widespread unmet need. Identifying health conditions and support needs earlier results in actionable clinical and social care measures and improves the quality of care, whilst supporting cost-effective use of resources.

Specific examples in Scotland include new diagnoses, improved medication management, increased access to screening and preventative care and identification of social care and safeguarding issues, as well as improving engagement with mainstream services.

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Annual health checks have also been successfully used to support people in the Coming Home group who are delayed in hospital to transition back into the community. They are not only key to supporting successful transitions, but can also contribute to the prevention of future breakdowns in support or unnecessary admissions or re-admissions to hospital for this population.

In my letter to the committee in August of last year about Learning Disability Week I informed you of the welcome news that in 2024-25 over six thousand people with a learning disability were offered a health check. This evidenced a marked improvement in delivery, with an additional 4,756 people being offered an annual health check compared to 2023-24.

Nearly four thousand people took up the opportunity to have a health check, resulting in 1,740 onward referrals to other services, providing vital opportunities for prevention, early intervention, treatment and support.

Management information received from Boards covering the period April to September 2025 indicates that delivery continues to gather pace, with an estimated 5,296 Annual Health Checks being offered in the first six months of the year. This resulted in an estimated 3,567 checks being completed and 1,757 onward referrals. Final figures for 2025-26 will be confirmed when the Scottish Government publishes its annual national data for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 in June 2026.

I am aware that challenges remain around delivery and that more work is needed to ensure that every person who is eligible is offered an annual health check.

I have been meeting with NHS Boards individually over the past few months and annual health checks have been included in those discussions. I have been very clear about my expectation that delivery must be a priority for Boards - in line with the National Directions issued by the Scottish Government in 2022 - and that the £2 million of annual funding we provide to Boards is fully utilised for this purpose. The ask that NHS Boards included annual health checks in their Annual Delivery Plans this year further signals the importance I attach to delivery.

Officials review progress and support delivery through regular National Implementation Group meetings attended by leads from every NHS Board. They also meet individually with NHS Boards to discuss any barriers or challenges and identify potential options and solutions.

My officials and I will continue to engage with Boards to ensure that we maintain momentum and build on the positive outcomes already achieved.

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In addition to funding and support via the National Implementation Group, we provide a number of mechanisms to support delivery. This includes:

- The National Data Programme Board which shapes the governance and delivery arrangements required to support the consistent use and recording of health check data.
- Educational resources we commissioned NHS Education Scotland to develop to support practitioners to carry out the annual health checks.
- Work with key stakeholders such as Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD), Down's Syndrome Scotland (DSS) and PAMIS to create resources for people with lived experience to support their knowledge and understanding of annual health checks [Health Check Awareness Video.mp4 - Health Check Awareness Video - Frame.io](#)
DSS resources - [Annual Health Checks | Down's Syndrome Scotland](#)
- A new LD Annual Health Checks Involvement Network in partnership with SCLD which creates an accessible, co-ordinated engagement mechanism for people with lived experience to engage with and be meaningfully involved in the delivery of annual health checks [Annual Health Checks - SCLD](#)
- A page on the Scottish Government website - a one stop shop for information and relevant links and signposting [Autism and learning disabilities - Mental health - gov.scot](#)
- New learning disability specific pages on NHS Inform including a dedicated page for annual health checks.
- A NES TURAS page dedicated to annual health checks including links to new podcasts which have been recorded in partnership with NES [Scottish Annual Health Checks | Turas | Learn](#), Link to podcasts - [Equal Health Equal Lives | NHS Education for Scotland, Catriona Jamieson](#)

Engagement with people with lived experience is vital to the ongoing implementation of annual health checks and is something that the Scottish Government is committed to continuing to embed throughout.

I hope the information I have provided has demonstrated the positive progress we are making towards achieving our ambition as well as illustrating the continued commitment and ongoing work underway to support delivery.

Yours sincerely



Tom Arthur MSP

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