Adult Learning Disability Service
Bowel Health Awareness and Screening Project

Completion of bowel screening amongst patients with learning disabilities is low and awareness of bowel health is poor. The aims of the Bowel Health Awareness and Screening Project are:

- To raise awareness of good bowel health for all adults with a learning disability over age of 55 years. Helping them to prepare for the screening in 5 years’ time.
- To increase the uptake of Bowel Screening for patients with a learning disability aged over 60.
- To get patients with a learning disability talking about a subject that can be embarrassing but is really important for their health and wellbeing.

The project has been running since November 2014 and targets patients that have a learning disability that have not completed Bowel Screening kits as a part of the regular NHS Bowel Screening service. General Practices are encouraged to refer these non-responder patients to the Adult Learning Disability Service. The patients are then supported to make an informed choice about accessing bowel screening. Patients are offered Bowel Health Awareness sessions. The learning disability team facilitate access to the screening programme for those patients who decide they want to have Bowel Screening.

Many people with a learning disability find written information hard to understand. Easy read and pictorial information can empower people to be able to make informed decisions about their own health and wellbeing. In collaboration with the Greater Manchester Bowel Screening Service Andrew Hogg Assistant Practitioner, Adult Learning Disability Service, Wigan Specialised Services Division has taken the lead in devising an easy read Good Bowel Health Awareness Presentation and Booklet. This was developed referencing a training package developed by the North West NHS Bowel Screening team called ‘The Journey of Food’. The easy read version can be used during 1 to 1 sessions with patients with a learning disability and also group bowel health awareness sessions.

April 2015 was Bowel Health Awareness Month and the launch of the Greater Manchester Bowel movement which aims to increase the uptake of bowel screening in the region. Everyone can become part of ‘the movement’ by accessing the following link: [http://www.gmmovement.co.uk/](http://www.gmmovement.co.uk/)

“The aim is to try to increase uptake of Bowel Screening and advise people on making dietary changes”

Andrew Hogg, Assistant Practitioner

A selection of some of the visual and easy read resources used during the sessions.
Bowel Health Awareness Project: Betty’s Story.

Betty is a 68 year old woman with a learning disability who has not had bowel screening for the last six years. Betty lives independently in her own flat and has Home Care Support. Betty also has a physical disability (cerebral palsy) which affects her mobility. She uses an electronic wheelchair, walking aids and leg splints to get around. Betty has the use of just one of her arms.

Over the past six years Betty had been sent 3 Bowel screening kits and she had not responded to any of these. Due to Betty’s learning and physical disabilities she could not complete the kits on her own. Her Home Carers did not check Betty’s mail and no one took any action regarding the bowel screening kit that she had been sent. Home Carers reported they were unable to take any action as it was not in the care package remit.

Betty was referred to the Adult Learning Disability Service to be part of the Bowel Health Awareness and Screening Project Andrew Hogg, Assistant Practitioner, Adult Learning Disability Service, completed a number of 1to1 sessions with Betty around Bowel Health awareness. The easy read resources he has developed were used to aid Betty’s understanding of Bowel Health and Bowel Screening.

The support from Andrew enabled Betty to make an informed choice about screening. The bowel screening hub was contacted to request that a kit be sent out to Betty. Andrew then supported Betty to complete the bowel screening kit as directed. Completion of the kit involved Betty completing 3 stool samples and then sending the kit back to the NHS Bowel Screening hub.

Andrew identified that the home care team that support Betty with her food shopping would also benefit from advice and guidance about healthy eating. A meal planner for carers to follow was also provided and this gives guidance to ensure that Betty is having healthy options at meal times. The healthier options will help Betty improve her bowel health.

‘I know about some of the foods I need to eat to make sure I go to the toilet regularly’.

‘I know that the leaflets are all about cancer and checking that everything is okay with my bowels.’
Betty is showing a variety of accessible resources that are used during the Bowel health awareness sessions. Including an easy read package developed by the Adult Learning Disability Service, an easy read booklet from Bowel Cancer UK—Keeping Your Bowel Healthy and other easy read resources.

The aim of the sessions is to keep them simple, informative and interactive and try to break down barriers about talking about bowel habits and how changes to diet and lifestyle can also help to improve Bowel health.