

Access to Cervical Screening services for woman with Learning Disabilities

Part of the role of a Community Learning Disability nurse is to facilitate access to mainstream health services i.e. primary and secondary care NHS screening programmes. Their role is also to deliver Health Promotion and the education and training to staff groups.

There is evidence in relation to cervical screening and women with learning disabilities that they are not gaining access to these services. This is demonstrated as follows:-

- Uptake of cervical screening in women with learning disabilities, ranges between 13% and 25%, of the eligible population
- A study, revealed out of 560 women aged 20-70 years. Only 25% had ever had a cervical smear
- Remaining 75% had been 'ceased' by their general practitioner.

Good practice guidance from the NHS cancer screening programmes (2006) recommends that where ever possible women with a learning disability should:-

- Have access to information to enable them to make their own decisions about whether or not to accept an invitation.
- Know what to expect when they attend a screening to ensure that it is a positive experience.

In order to address this issue, the Learning Disability team were asked to develop and deliver an education session with regard to equal access to cervical screening. This is presented to new cytology sample takers as part of their training.

An education session was developed by the Learning Disability team called 'Equal access to cervical screening'. The objectives for this session are to:

- Gain awareness of learning disabilities.
- Gain an awareness of the barriers to equal access.
- Understand best practice guidance
- Develop practical skills in order to promote best practice
- Increase knowledge regarding capacity to consent
- Increase knowledge about the resources available

The learning disability team present the training session to the new cytology sample takers when required. We hope that this will continue in the future.