



Annual Health Check Survey Report

March 2017

Introduction

North Somerset People First is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) which was established in 1991, with the aim of improving the lives of people with learning disabilities by introducing self advocacy. The charity currently facilitates four "Speaking Up" self advocacy groups, as well as carrying out Person Centred Planning and Advocacy work, supporting victims of Disability Hate Crime and running monthly drop-in advice/advocacy sessions and social activities for people with learning disabilities in North Somerset.

Background

Annual Health Checks for adults with learning disabilities were introduced in England in 2008-9. The aims of these were to improve early detection rates of certain health conditions e.g. cancer and heart disease, to check that any ongoing treatments were appropriate and to help people with learning disabilities to become more familiar with their GP surgery.

According to the most recent data available from "Improving Health and Lives" (the Learning Disability Observatory), in 2013-14 44% of people with a learning disability in England had an annual health check, 29% of people missed their health check that year (but had had one previously), and 27% of people with learning disabilities were registered with GPs who do not carry out annual health checks.

Aims of the Survey

North Somerset People First carried out a survey to investigate the quantity and quality of Annual Health Checks being carried out in North Somerset.

The aims were to try and find out:

- How widely available Annual Health Checks are to adults with learning disabilities in North Somerset
- Whether people are being provided with easy read information about making an appointment, and the process of the health check itself
- Whether people are being offered a Health Action Plan, as recommended in the "Valuing People" white paper published in 2001 by the Department of Health.
- Whether the Annual Health Checks being carried out are covering all of the tests recommended in the Royal College of General Practitioner's "Step by Step Guide for GP Practices: Annual Health Checks for People with a Learning Disability" published in 2010.

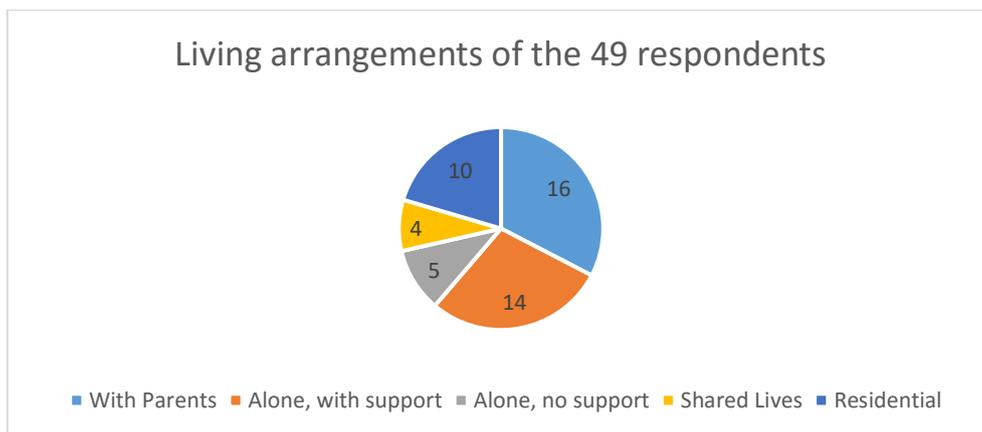
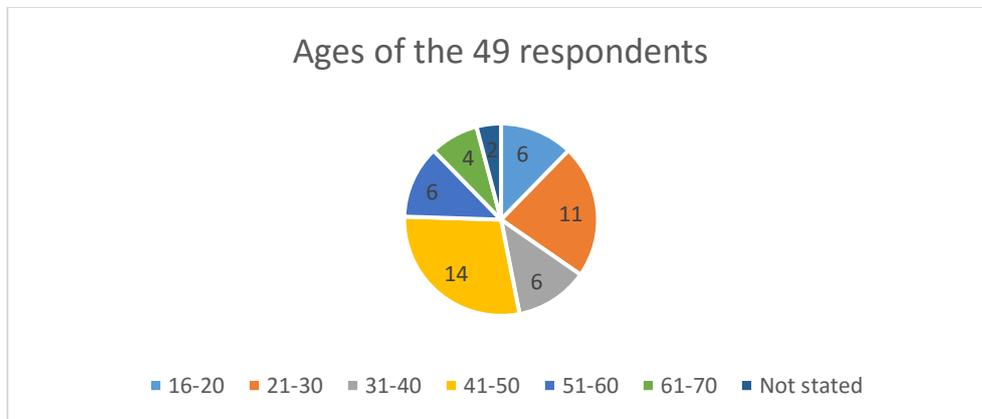
We were also particularly interested in finding out whether breast and testicle examinations were forming part of people's Annual Health Checks, as historically people with learning disabilities have been much less likely to be offered these screenings.

Method

Adults with learning disabilities were asked to complete an easy read survey (see appendix 1) with support if required.

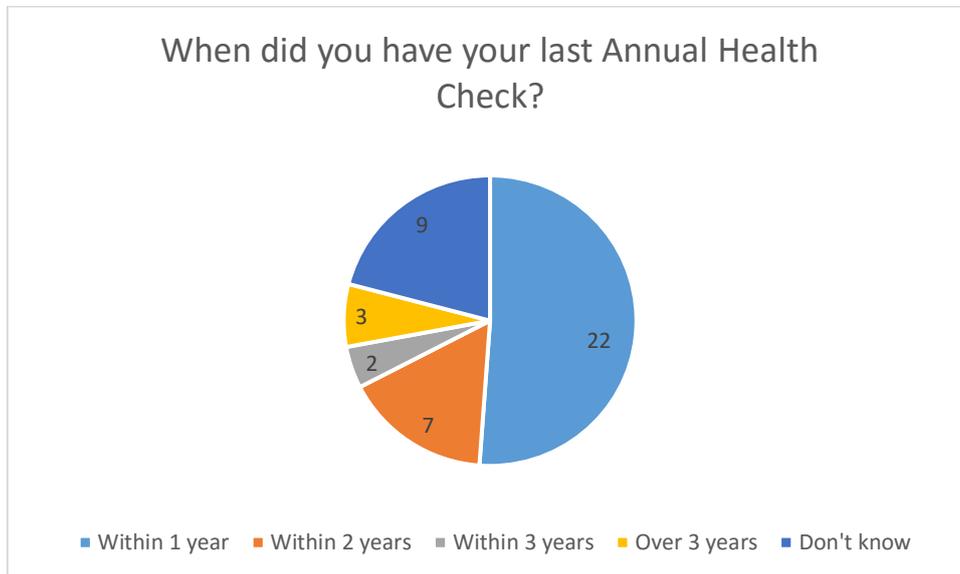
Surveys were completed by members of North Somerset People First's Speaking Up groups, and were emailed out to various service providers and all Shared Lives carers in North Somerset. The survey was also accessible via the North Somerset People First website.

We received 49 completed surveys, and some of the demographic information is shown in the graphs below:

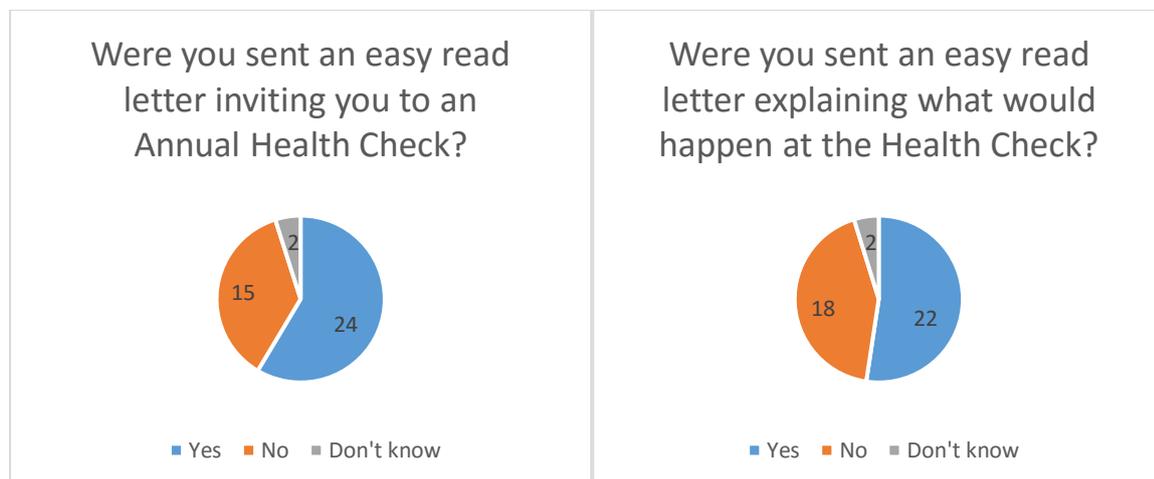


Results and Findings

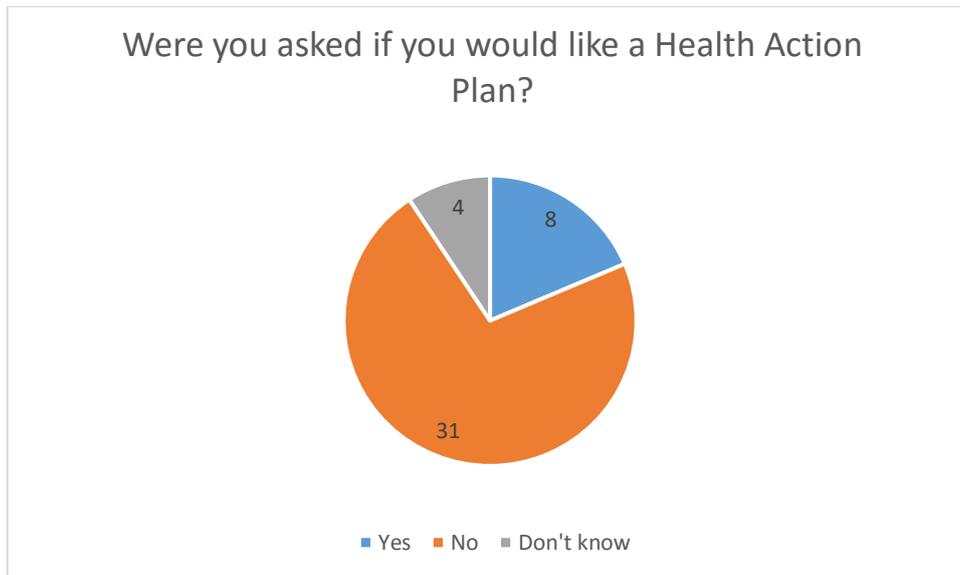
The following graph shows the number of people who responded that they had/had not previously attended an annual health check.



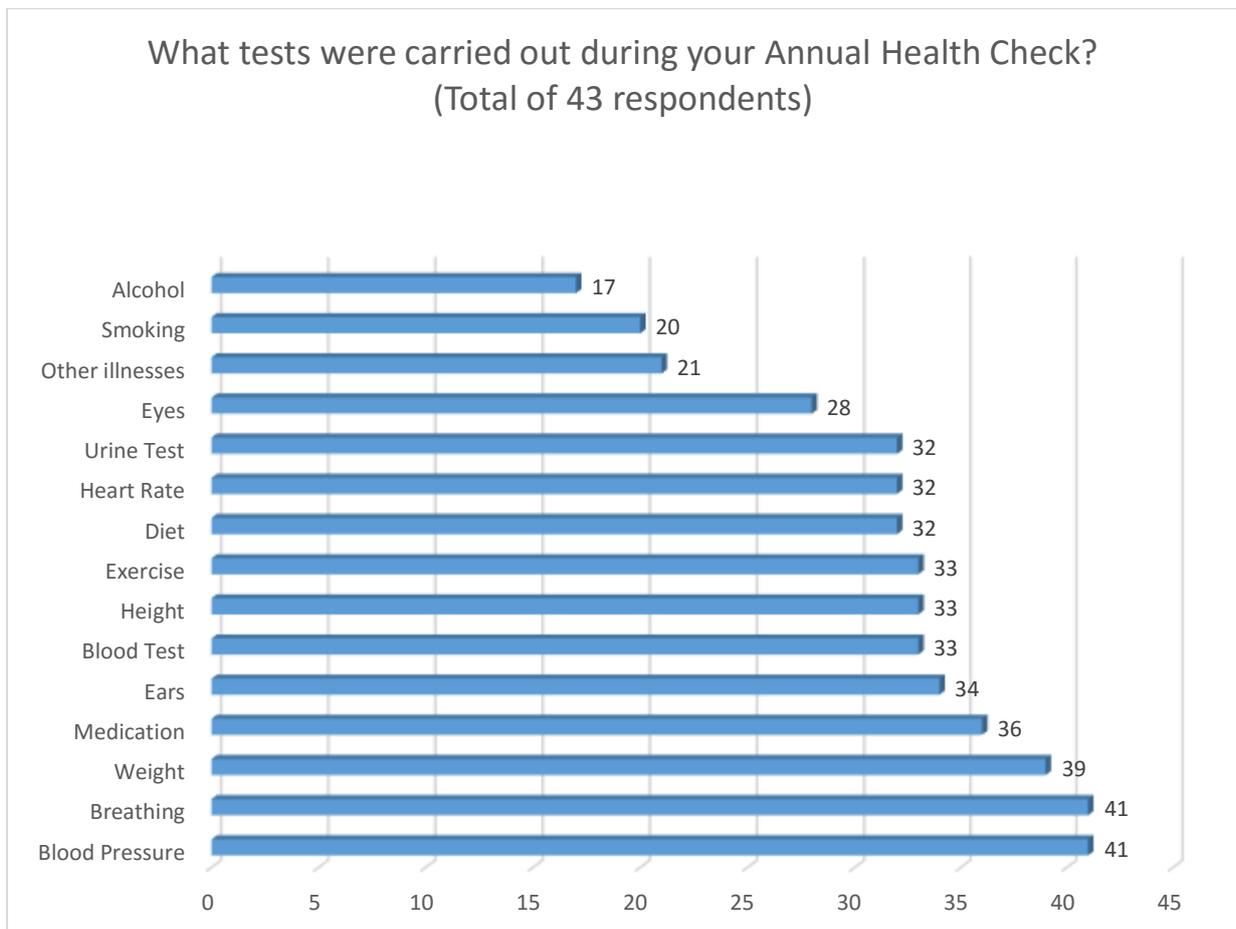
The graphs below show the number of people who responded that they had/had not been sent easy read information either inviting them for a health check or explaining the process.



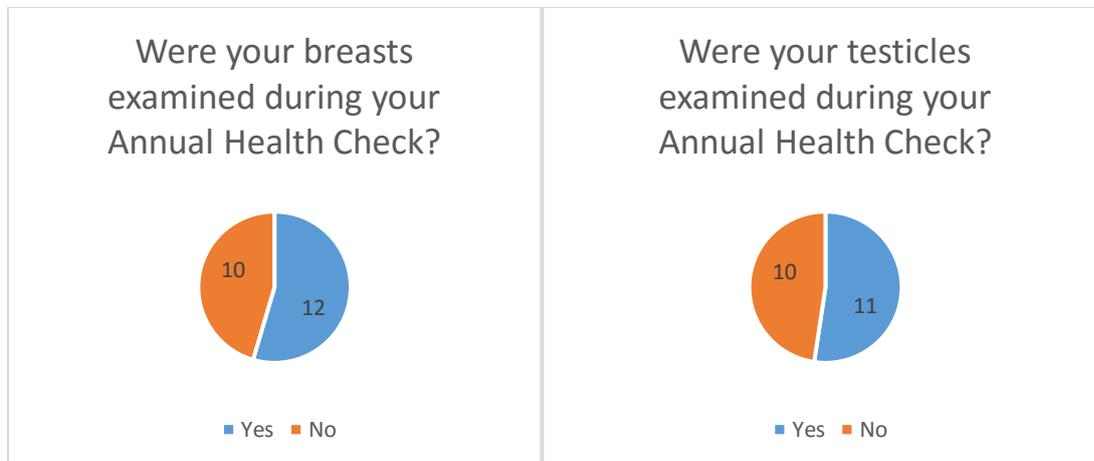
We asked people whether they were offered a Health Action Plan following their Annual Health Check and the responses were as follows:



The graph below shows how many people told us that they had had each of the recommended checks carried out as part of their Annual Health Check.



The following graphs show how many females responded that they had had their breasts examined as part of their Annual Health Check, and how many males responded that they had had their testicles examined.



Other Comments made by Respondents

When completing the health check survey several respondents provided extra information on their experiences of having an annual health check.

This was mainly regarding the communication styles of the professionals carrying out the health checks.

Three people commented that they had felt rushed during their health check, and that not enough time was taken explaining things to them.

Another person who had attended the appointment with a support worker accompanying them said that they felt that the professional spoke to their supporter for a lot of the time rather than addressing them directly, which had made them feel uncomfortable.

There were also positive comments received, with several people saying that they found having a health check a good experience overall and that it was a reassuring thing to have done.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In terms of the numbers of people attending Annual Health Checks our survey results suggest that North Somerset compares favourably with the national figures, in that 45% of people surveyed said they had received an annual health check within the past year, a further 43% said that they had one within the previous 3 years. 12% of people answered that they had never had an annual health check.

However, when investigating the information provided to people prior to an Annual Health Check appointment our results found that only 59% of those questioned responded that they had received an easy read letter inviting them to an appointment, and 52% responded that they had received easy read information explaining the process.

Additional anecdotal evidence from our members bears this out and individuals have told us that they would have found attending an annual health check less daunting and felt more prepared if they had received accessible information beforehand.

Receiving an easy read invitation letter may also lead to a greater take-up of appointments, for the same reason.

The majority (72%) of people questioned said that were not offered a Health Action Plan following their annual health check, and many told us that they were not aware of what a Health Action Plan is. Valuing People (2001) recommended that all people with a learning disability should be able to have a Health Action Plan and so, 15 years later, it is disappointing that so many people are either without one or unaware of their existence. Our staff team found that many people completing the questionnaire were unaware of what a Health Action Plan was, but once it had been explained said that they would like to have one.

When looking at the data collected regarding the specific checks that are being carried out as part of an Annual Health Check we noted that the lowest number of positive responses was for checking whether individuals smoked or drank alcohol. It would be interesting to discover the reason for this, and whether assumptions are being made about the likelihood of people with a learning disability using tobacco or alcohol.

Another item on the list of checks that had a low positive response was an eye check. This may represent a missed opportunity, as people with a learning disability are 10 times more likely to have problems with their eyes or sight, and some people may not be regularly attending opticians for eye tests and so have undiagnosed issues with their eyes.

One of our main aims in carrying out this piece of work was to find out whether people were having breast and testicle examinations as part of their Annual Health Check.

We gathered responses from 12 females over the age of 41 and 7 responded that they had had their breasts examined as part of their Annual Health Check. Therefore the percentage of females in the target age groups (50-70) for breast screening who had had their breasts examined was 58%. This is below the national target figure of 76%, and would suggest that some further work may be needed to educate both health professionals and people with learning disabilities about the importance of this screening being carried out. There are NHS easy read booklets available on Breast Screening that GP surgeries could provide to females with a learning disability but we are not aware of how many surgeries are currently making these available to patients who may benefit.

Of the males that we surveyed 21 were in the age bracket of 16-50, and 9 responded that they had had their testicles examined as part of their Annual Health Check, so 43% of respondents. The age group most commonly affected by testicular cancer according to NHS figures is ages 15-49, and so this figure would appear rather low and may show another area in which more education and awareness raising is required.