

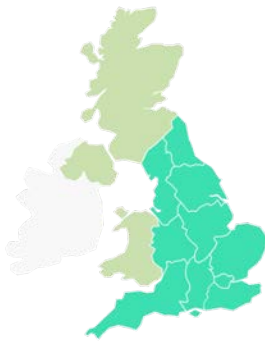
Helping People Stay Safe with Medicines



Working Together to Make Medicines Safer



This booklet is from the NHS



It is about a **national project** to lower the harm caused by certain medicines to people with a learning disability.

A **national project** is a big task or plan that is done across the whole country.

The medicines are called psychotropics – they affect how your brain works.



In this booklet, we will tell you more about:

- The effects of psychotropic medicines.
- Trying to lower the harm caused by psychotropic medicines to people with a learning disability.

People with a learning disability and psychotropic medicines



There are about 1.3 million people with a learning disability in England.



About 14 in 100 people with a learning disability are given psychotropic medicines.



But only 1 in 100 people without a learning disability are given psychotropic medicines.

About psychotropic medicines



Psychotropic medicines can be helpful to treat things like:

- Psychosis – this is when someone can see or hear things that other people do not or they think strange things are happening.



- Depression – this can make you feel very sad and also worried about things.



- Anxiety – this means feeling worried or nervous about something.



- Epilepsy – this is when people have seizures (fits).



Psychotropic medicines may also be used for behaviour that challenges. We will tell you more about what this is on the next page.



All medicines can have side-effects.

Side-effects are unwanted things that can happen to your body after taking medicines, like feeling tired.



But not everyone will have the side-effects from medicines.



So medicines should only be given when there are clear reasons that the person needs to take them.



Psychotropic medicines can affect how well someone can live their life. Sometimes they can be helpful, but sometimes they can have side-effects.

Using psychotropic medicine for behaviour that challenges



Behaviour that challenges is different behaviour that some people with learning disability show if their needs are not being met.



If possible, doctors should try and use a different therapy than medicine to support people with a learning disability with their behaviour that challenges.



But sometimes psychotropic medicines are needed and are helpful.



If someone is given psychotropic medicine for behaviour that challenges, it should be:

- The smallest dose that will help them.

A dose is the amount of medicine a doctor says you should take.



- Checked regularly, like at a review of all the medicine someone is taking.



- Stopped as soon as possible.



This report talks about helping people with a learning disability who might have behaviour that is hard to manage. The goal is to keep them safe from medicines that might harm them.

What is happening in the East Midlands?



For this national programme, in the East Midlands we are working with health and care organisations in Leicestershire & Rutland and in Northamptonshire. These are known as systems.



Both systems have developed ideas on how they can make services and care better for people with a learning disability.

Ideas included:

- New rules will guide how doctors prescribe mental health medicines.
- People will be able to get non-medicine treatments sooner.
- There will be new, clearer paperwork to help everyone communicate better.
- Information and data will be used to decide who needs help and what kind of support to offer.



They had a meeting online on 16 April 2026. This meeting was to work out which improvement ideas could be worked on together.



The systems agreed that they will need to work separately on some of the ideas.



The meeting went well because everyone wanted to help and worked together nicely. People shared their ideas and listened to each other.



There were some problems, like not having enough people at the meeting. Also, no one from children's services was there.



Next, they will keep working on the ideas and check how things are going. They want to make sure the changes are good for everyone.



The work will be watched by people in charge to make sure it stays on track. People with experience will help to make sure the changes are right.



We want people with a learning disability to help us check the work and make sure it is as good as it can be.



This plan helps both groups work together better. It gives them a clear path to make medicines safer for people with learning disabilities.

You can find out more by visiting our website:



Website:

<https://healthinnovation-em.org.uk/medicinesafety>

If you would like to get involved you can email us:

Email: healthinnovation-em@nottingham.ac.uk