

**Covid-19 testing for patients with Learning Disabilities
and/ or Autism before surgery/ treatment/ attendance at
LTHT**

Standard Operating Procedure Version 1 18.6.2020

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, reasonable adjustments for people with Learning Disabilities and Autism in Leeds Teaching Hospitals (LTHT) are considered on a case by case basis. LTHT is committed to ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that patients with Learning Disabilities and/ or Autism receive equal access to healthcare.

The Standard Operating Procedure 'COVID-19 testing for adult patients before surgery/ treatment/ attendance at LTHT' outlines the expectations for all patients.

However, it is recognised that due to Learning Disability and/ or Autism some patients may be unable to:

- follow the recommendations for self and household isolation
- tolerate swabbing
- describe symptoms such as loss of taste or smell
- attend without the support of a family member or carer

At the point of decision to treat

- Discussion should be held with the patient if they are over 16 (or the parent/carer of a child). The clinical risks of not having a swab and the potential risks of COVID-19 on the outcome of their procedure should be explained. If the patient is over 16 and appears to lack capacity then mental capacity should be assessed, proceeding to a best interests decision if required.
- Discussion should be held about whether the patient will need to be accompanied by a parent or carer for treatment. If so, the parent or carer who will support the patient should also follow the COVID-19 testing procedure themselves for self-isolation and be swabbed before admission.

If the patient is unable to follow guidance the following procedure should be followed for all elective patients:

1. Contact the Learning Disability and Autism team for advice on 0113 2066836/ 07899 988703/ leedsth-tr.ldautism@nhs.net
2. Additional support to follow the swabbing procedure should be offered, such as:
 - Offering accessible leaflets on the LTHT Learning Disability web page: <https://www.leedsth.nhs.uk/a-z-of-services/learning-disability/>
 - Swabbing the carer or relative first, to help the patient to understand what will happen
 - Offering a nasal swab only, if the patient cannot tolerate a pharyngeal swab.

If the patient is unable to tolerate any swab, the decision about whether to proceed or postpone would be a decision made by the clinical team, patient and/or carers, carefully weighing up the risks and benefits and taking into account the prevalence of COVID infection in the community at the time the procedure is scheduled.

On arrival for surgery/ treatment

If patient has self isolated for 14 days and has had a negative swab at 72 hrs pre-admission then they will be admitted to an area designated for COVID negative patients.

If they have not completed 14 days isolation or managed to have a swab, their symptoms will be assessed on admission and a further COVID swab will be attempted. They will be offered a side room/ cohort ward pending that result and then transferred to an appropriate area depending on their clinical and individual needs.

The parent or carer attending with the patient should also be swabbed, if this has not previously been achieved e.g. if a different parent/carer attends on admission.

Treatment will be carried out in the most appropriate area for the patient, taking into account their individual needs and their COVID infection status at the time. If the operation/ procedure needs to go ahead then that would need to be carried out / cared for before and after in a hot/ indeterminate area (ie cold surgical facilities could not be used).

The clinical team will liaise with the patient and their parent/ carer to determine the most appropriate place for them to be cared for post operatively. The Learning Disability and Autism Team will be able to offer support and guidance at any point throughout the admission.

Sign off

Group:

Date:

Review: This will be an iterative process as further national guidelines are available and further LTHT treatment capacity is released as recovery plans progress.

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