Learning disabilities and primary care
Comments from Gateshead Forum and Gateshead People
Discussions with people with learning disabilities about primary care

Dentist
- Most visited the dentist, often accompanied by a parent or care worker. General dental health was not good, missing teeth etc.
- Access to surgeries was frequently up or down stairs.
- They had some problems with explanations of charges, particularly with a private dentist.
- Some dentists talk to the patient, others to the carer.
- They don't always explain treatment plans.
- Charges put people off going.
- Some people get reminder letters about check-ups, others do not. This may be about who opens their mail.
- Many had had extractions and it was unclear why this was, why alternatives had not been used.
- Several had a general anaesthetic for treatment.

Optician
- Most visited the optician for an annual eye-test, generally accompanied by a parent or care worker.
- Frames are expensive.
- Optician sometimes talks to the support worker not the patient.
- Some seemed to have a simplified chart to read letters from rather than sentences.

General Practitioner
- Some talk to the care staff or parents rather than the patient.
- Some pay much more attention to the computer screen than to the patient.
- One had been given a form to fill in which had to be done on the spot. It was very hard to understand.
- One had had an appointment made for her between the practice and a parent without seeing if it was convenient.
- One had been trained/supported by care staff to make her own appointments rather than to have them made for her.
- Some surgeries would benefit from automatic doors as well as ramps.
- Some patients are told when the doctor is ready by their name on a screen and a beep. There could be problems if they can't read or are hard of hearing.
- Prescriptions are expensive. Some patients have to wait two days for re-supply.
- They don't get very long for an appointment.
- Most understood why they had to take medication; it had been explained to them.