

Outlining the intent and impact behind the introduction of CHAP (Comprehensive Health Assessment Program) for Disability Accommodation Services (DAS)

People with an intellectual disability experience lower health status, higher morbidity and premature mortality compared to the general population. Cognitive and communication difficulties can make it difficult for people with intellectual disability to recognise and communicate pain, discomfort or other symptoms of ill health. As a result, reliance is often placed on support workers to bring health problems to the attention of the GP, and to provide a medical history.

However, support staff may also be unaware of symptoms and with a turnover in support staff, an accurate history may be difficult to obtain. One of the benefits of CHAP is that support staff document the person's health history in the first section and provide this to the GP. This means that staff come to the consultations prepared and are able to provide GPs with concise, accurate and relevant information.

CHAP is a published, validated, evidence based tool that has already been implemented in Shared Supported Accommodation services for people with an intellectual disability in 3 other states. When CHAP is used for patients with an intellectual disability there is a: 6.6-fold increase in detection of vision impairment 30-fold increase in hearing testing 9-fold increase in immunisation updates. Improvements in women's health screening (Pap smears were eight times more common). CHAP has been shown to increase detection of new disease by 1.6 times.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that GPs are under no obligation to use the second part of CHAP, and are welcome to use an alternative tool. We will alter our practice instructions to staff to make this clear.

However, Disability Accommodation Staff must provide the first section of CHAP to the GP and must implement the management plan as outlined by the GP as a result of the annual health review so GPs can expect to still receive the CHAP forms from DAS staff.

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