



Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST)

HPFT Learning Disability Dietitians have issued a position statement following a recent increase of queries from care providers asking if they should be using Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST).

- The 'Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool' ('MUST') has been designed to help identify adults who are underweight and at risk of malnutrition, as well as those who are obese.
- 'MUST' is a widely recognised and approved tool for assessing level of malnutrition risk. There are teaching resources available to guide people to correctly use this
<https://www.bapen.org.uk/screening-and-must/must/introducing-must>
- BMI (Step 1) and alternative physical measurements do not take in to account the potential differences in body composition of people with learning or physical disabilities compared to the general population. It may be not be appropriate to take physical measurements in some situations e.g. unable to position body correctly or challenging behaviour. However, there are no alternative evidence based approved tools for assessing malnutrition risk in this client population. In the absence of an alternative it is advised that 'MUST' continue to be used to consider malnutrition risk.
BAPEN's view: "BMI is used as a general indicator of protein energy status and recommended for this purpose by national and international organisations. Whilst some clients with learning or physical disabilities were included in the pilot phase of 'MUST', the tool was not specifically validated in this client group. Research is required to assess if BMI reflects the same or different body composition in those subjects with learning or physical disabilities".
- In addition to completing Step 1 BMI or alternative measurements (when it is appropriate); the assessor should consider and note overall clinical impression – Obvious wasting (very thin), thin, acceptable weight, overweight and obesity.
- If it is not possible to complete Step 2 comparing weight records from the previous 3-6months; the assessor should consider if there are subjective signs to indicate unplanned weight loss – clothes/ jewellery/ dentures/ continence pads have become loose fitting, a history of decreased food intake over 3-6 months and underlying disease or psycho-social/physical disabilities likely to cause weight loss.
- The assessor should discuss clients 'MUST' score and potential risk of malnutrition with a GP or Dietitian if they are unsure of what action to take.

28/11/2018

Emma Smith

Specialist Learning Disability Dietitian
Hertfordshire Community Assessment
& Treatment Services

28/11/2018

Fern Dudleston

Specialist Learning Disability Dietitian
Buckinghamshire Community
LD Health Team