

History of Learning Disabilities

In the past people with a learning disability were not treated very well. Terminology was often derogatory and the care provided lacked dignity and respect, often leading to institutionalisation.

Making Improvements

- In the 1970s long stay hospitals and institutions started to close and the idea of better services for people in the community was born
- Over the next twenty years the way in which people with a learning disability were supported and housed continued to improve with the introduction of care in the community
- The 1990s saw the introduction of direct payments and the growing influence and power of the People First movement and other self advocacy groups
- Person-centred planning and the Human Rights Act led to people with a learning disability taking more control of their lives and making their own choices. The 2000s saw the closure of the remaining long stay institutions at last

Getting more rights

Valuing People 2001 was the first government plan to pull together everything to do with people with a learning disability: rights, independence, choice and inclusion. The key principle of Valuing People is 'nothing for us without us'.

Guidelines & legislation

United nations conventions on the rights of a person with disabilities

650 million people in the world living with disabilities (about 10 per cent of the world's population) lack the opportunities of the mainstream population. They encounter a myriad of physical and social obstacles that:

- Prevent them from receiving an education
- Prevent them from getting jobs, even when they are well qualified
- Prevent them from accessing information
- Prevent them from obtaining proper health care
- Prevent them from getting around
- Prevent them from "fitting in" and being accepted

1993 the UN adopted the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons that have provided policy guidelines on promoting the same opportunities to persons with disabilities that others enjoy. And these have served as model legislation for a number of countries.

The Rules, however, are not a legally binding instrument, and disability advocates note that there are no enforceable obligations without a convention.

Definition

'A state of arrested or incomplete development of mind'. Somebody with a learning disability is said also to have 'significant impairment of intellectual functioning' and 'significant impairment of adaptive/social functioning'

Terminology

Empowerment

Means to enable or permit.

Choice

Means the right, power, or opportunity to choose.

Respect

Means esteem for or a sense of the worth or excellence of a person, something considered as a manifestation of a personal quality or ability.

Equality

Means the state or quality of being equal; correspondence in quantity, degree, value, rank, or ability.

Dignity

Means the state or quality of being worthy.

Learning Disability

Factsheet



Learning disability classifications

Mild	Moderate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyday speech• Considerable independence• Employment possible• Family life• Academic problems• Uneven profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited progress in school• Likely to need ongoing supervision• Rarely achieve full independence• Language variable• Capable of practical tasks with support and/or supervision
Severe	Profound
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding severely limited• Often immobile or severely restricted• Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rudimentary non-verbal communication• Epilepsy and sensory impairments

Comorbidity

This is where additional conditions, disorders or diseases exist alongside the primary condition.

It is highly likely that a person with moderate to profound learning disabilities will have an additional health issue.

Additional health issue examples

Epilepsy	Autism	Downs Syndrome
Prader-Willi Syndrome	Angelmans Syndrome	

Person centred assessment

- The person is at the centre of the planning process.
- Family and friends are partners in planning.
- The plan shows what is important to a person now and for the future and what support they need.
- The plan helps the person to be part of a community of their choosing and helps the community to welcome them.
- The plan puts into action what a person wants for their life and keeps on listening - the plan remains 'live'.

Communication

Words

- Use words that you use everyday
- Write short sentences
- Use numbers instead of word
- Use full stops instead of punctuation
- Use bullet points
- Do not use abbreviations

Pages

- 1 subject per page
- Do not split words over 2 lines
- Do not split sentences over 2 pages
- Use page numbers
- Avoid columns
- Leave plenty of room for answers



Pictures

- Be consistent
- Pictures on the left, words on the right
- Do not float text across pictures
- Show times using 12 hour
- Pictures must make sense
- Pictures of locations and not maps

Type and paper

- Use Arial
- Use point 16 or bigger
- Use clear headings
- Stand out on coloured paper
- Green is not a good colour paper
- Use colour coding for subjects