

## NCEPOD Management of Acute illness in people with a Learning Disability study

### Definitions

A learning disability is different from a learning difficulty as a learning difficulty does not affect general intellect.

It is possible for a person to have both a learning disability and a learning difficulty. (Mencap - [Learning Difficulties: Types, Causes and Symptoms | Mencap](#))

#### **Learning disability:**

“A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), which started before adulthood.”

A learning disability is different for everyone. In all cases, a learning disability is a lifelong condition and cannot be resolved.

#### **Learning difficulty:**

A reduced intellectual ability for a specific form of learning, and includes conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A person with a learning disability may also have one or more learning difficulties.

A learning disability is not a physical disability

#### **Severity of learning disability**

Historically IQ scores were used, but now severity of learning disabilities are defined by assessing a person's ability to self care, live independently and ability to communicate.

*(The International Classification of Diseases 10th Revision (ICD-10) classification lists 'Learning Disabilities' under the title of 'Mental Retardation'. The latest edition, ICD-11, will be published in 2015 and will no longer use the term 'mental retardation', but 'Intellectual Disability'.)*

#### **Mild learning disability**

Likely to result in some difficulties in the acquisition and comprehension of complex language concepts and academic skills. Most people can manage basic self-care, domestic, and practical activities, and can live and work relatively independently, but may require appropriate support.

#### **Moderate learning disability**

Likely to have basic language and academic skills, but some will manage basic self-care, domestic, and practical activities. Most will need considerable and consistent support to live and work independently.

### **Severe learning disability**

Have very limited language and academic skills and may also have motor impairments. Typically need daily support in a supervised environment for adequate care, but may acquire basic self-care skills with intensive training.

### **Profound learning disability**

Results in very limited communication skills and may have basic concrete skills. May have motor and sensory impairments and typically need daily support in a supervised environment for adequate care.

### **Diagnostic overshadowing bias**

A situation where a patient's signs and symptoms are attributed to the learning disability thereby causing diagnostic inaccuracy. For example, it might mean interpreting behaviour of distress as normal behaviour or a mental health issue, rather than a way of communicating that the patient is in pain.

### **Reasonable adjustments**

The [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) states all organisations including health and social care, such as hospitals and GP surgeries must take steps to remove the barriers individuals face because of disability. These changes are called reasonable adjustments. They are specific to an individual person. They can be for physical or mental health conditions.

Examples can include:

**Time** - Providing longer appointments, and taking longer to make clinical assessments

**Environment** – Providing ear defenders or a side room for patients who may be distressed by noisy settings

**Attitude** - Understanding the value of carers and enabling them to remain with the patient, outside visiting hours, if requested

**Communication** – Ensuring information is provided in accessible formats such as easy-read or pictures

**Help** - Involving the learning disability team

(Based on [RCP Acute Care toolkit](#))

### **Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA)**

([Independent mental capacity advocates- GOV.UK](#))

An advocate supporting people who can't make or understand decisions by stating their views and wishes or securing their rights.

## **Carer**

Anyone who cares, unpaid, or a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

### **Carer passport**

(<https://www.carerpassport.uk/media/jqvhbjb/cp-hospitals-guide.pdf>)

A simple tool which identifies someone as being in a caring role for one of the hospital's patients. The passport will usually take the form of a card, badge or booklet.

### **Learning from Lives and Deaths (LeDeR) programme**

(<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/leder>)

The Learning from Lives and Deaths- people with a learning disability and autistic people (LeDeR) programme, funded by NHS England and NHS Improvement, was established in 2017 to improve healthcare for people with a learning disability and autistic people.

### **Accessible information standards**

England- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/patient-equalities-programme/equality-frameworks-and-information-standards/accessibleinfo/>

Wales- [Accessible Information Standard- Public Health Wales](#)

### **Learning Disability Improvement Standards (LDIS)**

(<https://www.improvementstandards.nhs.uk>)

Standards to help NHS trusts measure the quality of care they provide to people with learning disabilities, autism or both.