

Improving health together



www.northyorkshireandyork.nhs.uk/stayinghealthy

Public Health Factsheet

Welcome to this edition of Improving Health Together, which focuses on the health needs of people with learning disabilities.

The aim of the factsheet is to raise awareness of some of the challenges that people with learning disabilities face in accessing healthcare and improving their own health, giving professionals some practical ways to help. The factsheet also gives details of websites, resources and contacts.

The most commonly used definition of learning disability includes:

- ◆ significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence); with
- ◆ reduced ability to cope independently (social functioning); and
- ◆ which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development.¹

Improving the health of people with learning disabilities

Issue 15 — Sept/Oct 2009

HM Government

Valuing People Now:
a new three-year strategy
for people with learning
disabilities

'Making it happen for everyone'



There is clear evidence that most people with learning disabilities have poorer health than the rest of the population and are more likely to die at a younger age.²

Facts and figures

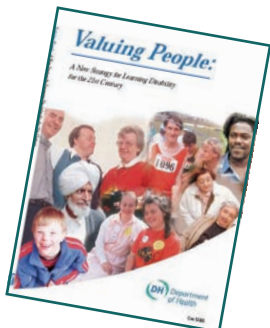
- ◆ Approximately 2.5% of the UK population is estimated to have a learning disability. This includes children, adults and older people.³
- ◆ In North Yorkshire and York this equates to about 20,000 people.⁴
- ◆ Around 2,000 people with learning disabilities are receiving social care services.⁵
- ◆ The prevalence of learning disability in the general population is expected to grow by 10% by 2020.³
- ◆ People with a learning disability are more likely than the rest of the population to suffer from health problems like congenital heart disease, physical disabilities, sensory impairment, epilepsy and mental health problems and obesity.³

All people with a learning disability are people first with the right to lead their lives like any others, with the same opportunities and responsibilities, and to be treated with dignity and respect.¹ (Valuing People)

Key Documents

Valuing People

The Valuing People white paper in 2001 set out “a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st Century”. It highlighted the fact that people with learning disabilities are among the most vulnerable and socially excluded in our society and developed a vision with four key principles of: rights, independence, choice and inclusion. It promised that people with learning disabilities would have the same right of access to mainstream health services as the rest of the population.



www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm50/5086/5086.htm

Death by Indifference

In March 2007, Mencap published a report called *Death by indifference*, which documented six case studies of people with learning disabilities who had died in NHS care. Their families and Mencap believed that these deaths were avoidable and the result of institutional discrimination.



www.mencap.org.uk

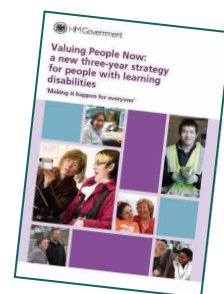
Healthcare for All

Sir Jonathan Michael chaired an independent inquiry into access to healthcare for people with learning disabilities which reported in July 2008. The inquiry found convincing evidence that people with learning disabilities have higher levels of unmet need and receive less effective treatment. Recommendations focussed on how to ensure that “reasonable adjustments” to ensure equal access to healthcare are made.

www.iahpld.org.uk/

Valuing People Now

In January 2009 *Valuing People Now* was published to update the government’s strategy for the next 3 years. The vision remains the same as in the original Valuing People strategy and the focus is on making that vision a reality.



www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093377

The Health Action Planning and Health Facilitation for people with learning disabilities: good practice guidance

This March 2009 guidance describes and clarifies good practice in health facilitation and health action planning. It supports localities to make progress on this and on reducing health inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities. It builds on previous DH guidance with key recommendations of relevant recent reports and research. www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_096505

Key concepts

Consent must be obtained from every adult who has the capacity before you examine, treat or care for them - and you must assume that every adult does have the capacity to consent unless it’s been proven otherwise. This is a legal and ethical responsibility as well as common courtesy. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 sets out the legal position surrounding mental capacity to make decisions.

Reasonable adjustment is required by law in the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995. It means that anyone who provides a service to the public has to make reasonable adjustments to make that service more accessible to people with disabilities.

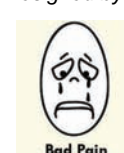
Diagnostic overshadowing is when a Clinician doesn’t recognise a person’s underlying health problem because they have a learning disability.

Barriers faced by people with a learning disability and ideas to help overcome them

These issues and solutions have been raised by local residents with learning disabilities and their carers in recent discussions.

Going to the doctors	
♦ <i>I need more time to understand.</i>	♦ Could you offer a double appointment?
♦ <i>I get anxious if I have to wait a long time or it's crowded.</i>	♦ Could you offer the first appointment of the day, or at a quieter time?
♦ <i>Electronic messages and computerised "arrival" systems are no good if you can't read.</i>	♦ Could you provide a personal option?
Communicating	
♦ <i>I am in the room!</i>	♦ Do you talk to the person themselves or focus on their carer?
♦ <i>I don't understand.</i>	♦ Some people will need extra help to understand. Try and use simple but not patronising language. Some people understand better when you use pictures, symbols or gestures (miming). If someone needs extra support, for example a carer or an interpreter, make sure they are available.
♦ <i>Leaflets are hard for me to understand.</i>	♦ Try and find out what would suit the individual. Easy read leaflets on a range of subjects are available (see p4).
♦ <i>If I don't understand first time, they just talk to my carer.</i>	♦ Could you try another way?
Treatment	
♦ <i>I didn't know what was going to happen to me and it was frightening.</i>	♦ Take the time to explain or show the patient what will happen beforehand. Could you arrange a visit first if it's a new environment for them?
♦ <i>I would like them to ask first before they take my blood.</i>	♦ Make sure you seek consent from the patient and they understand what is happening.
Healthy Lifestyle	
♦ <i>I only get information from my carers. No-one has ever asked me if I smoke.</i>	♦ Could you give healthy lifestyle advice and support to patients with a learning disability?

Designed by The Clear Communication People Ltd



Lord Darzi's vision is an NHS delivering high quality care for all users of services in all aspects, not just some.⁶

Further information

Mental Capacity Act

The public guardian website contains detailed information about the mental capacity act including the Code of Practice, a guide for people who work in health and social care and an easy read booklet. www.publicguardian.gov.uk/mca/mca.htm

Disability Discrimination Act

The RNIB website contains clear information about the Disability Discrimination Act and “reasonable adjustments” including frequently asked questions and a factsheet.

www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public_rnib003561.hcsp

Further information is available on the DirectGov website www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_4001069

Local Specialist Community Teams Learning Disabilities

Contact local teams for advice, support and access to resources.

Craven	01756 798777
Harrogate	0845 0349472
Hambleton & Richmondshire	01609 751163
Scarborough, Whitby, Ryedale	01723 581344
Selby, York	01904 724172

References/Policy Context

- 1 *Valuing People: a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st century.* Department of Health. London. 2001.
- 2 *Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities.* Department of Health. London. 2009
- 3 *Healthcare for All: report of the Independent inquiry into access to healthcare for people with learning disabilities.* Michael, Sir Jonathan. 2008.
- 4 Calculation derived from 2007 mid-year population estimates.
- 5 Calculation derived from York and North Yorkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.
- 6 *High Quality Care for All: NHS next stage review final report.* Department of Health. London. 2008

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Thank-you to local CTLD for their contributions.

General resources

Mencap's *Getting it right* campaign has produced a checklist to support healthcare professionals when they treat patients with learning disabilities.

www.mencap.org.uk/gettingitright

Surrey Learning Disability Partnership Board has produced *The hospital communication book* which is a practical guide to improving communications in healthcare settings.



www.surreypb.org.uk/section3/health/Hospital%20Book%20-%20vers%202%20-%20web.pdf

easyhealth have a range of easy to understand leaflets and videos which are free to download.

www.easyhealth.org.uk

Family Advice & Information Resource have a good range of booklets to purchase on a wide range of health issues.

www.fairadvice.org.uk

Websites

Department of Health
www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Deliveringadultsocialcare/Learningdisabilities/index.htm



Strategies, links and publications for those delivering learning disabilities care.

Valuing People

<http://valuingpeople.gov.uk/>

Valuing People Support Team.



British Institute of Learning Disabilities

www.bild.org.uk/

Working to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities.



MENCAP

www.mencap.org.uk

Providing support for people with learning disabilities in all aspects of their lives.



easyhealth

www.easyhealth.org.uk/

Health information that is easy to understand.



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