

Learning Difficulties / Learning Disabilities

Condition:

“Learning difficulty includes children and young people who have ‘specific learning difficulties’, for example dyslexia, but who do not have a significant general impairment of intelligence.” (source, DofE)

“A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities” (source, Mencap)

Children with learning difficulties or learning disabilities have more difficulties than others when dealing with new situations or changing or complicated issues. These difficulties will be more than those experienced by their peers without learning difficulties.

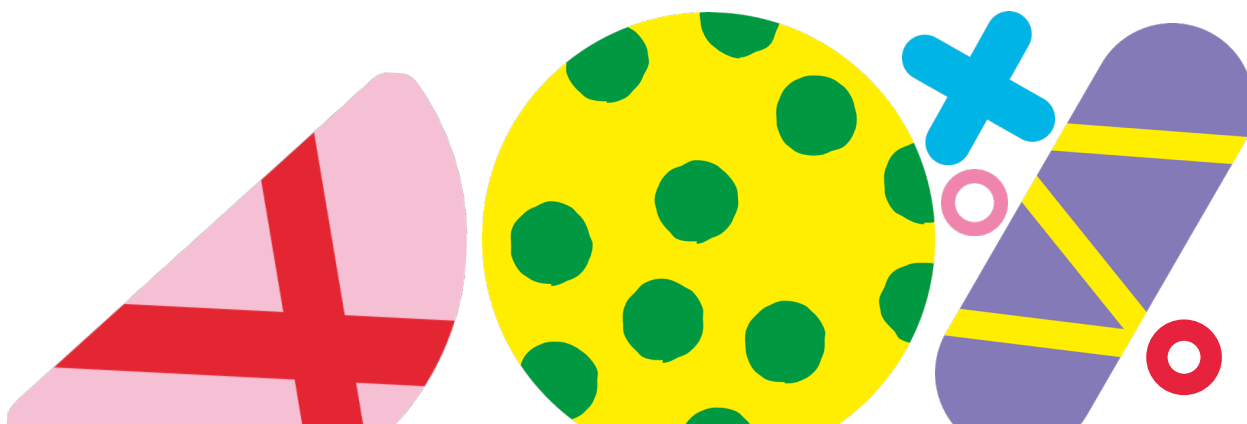
Children and young people can range from being just a little behind their peers to having severe learning disabilities, some possibly linked to other conditions or disabilities. It is important to note, however, that while some children with other conditions may also have learning difficulties, not all children with other conditions do.

Problem Areas:

- Difficulties with coping with new situations.
- Problems understanding complicated or changing issues.
- Lower ability to process information than their peers.
- Often learning at a level much younger than their physical age.
- May have limited reading ability or not be able to read at all.
- Can sometimes be linked to behavioural problems.
- Possibly linked to other conditions/disabilities.

Support strategies for your Group:

- Provide information which is easy to understand, simple and clear.
- Find out if the child uses sign language or symbols to aid understanding (e.g. Makaton or Sign-A-Long) and if possible integrate this into the materials that you prepare for the child. Many children with learning difficulties will not be able to read





much, if at all.

- Keep talks short. Five minutes might be all that the child can comfortably manage. Mix it up with songs, craft, drama etc. to add variety and keep interest.
- If a child becomes noisy, moves around, or shows other non-conventional behaviour, try to be patient while helping the child to re-engage with the programme in a different way. Also be understanding when a child doesn't pick up on 'normal' activity or instructions straight away.
- If your team make-up allows, and especially if there is someone in your team with suitable experience, it may be helpful to provide one-to-one assistance for a child with learning difficulties/disabilities.
- If one-to-one help is not a realistic option, try to take extra time when explaining something and don't show signs of impatience.
- Again, if one-to-one help is not realistic, appoint someone in the team to look out for if the general needs of the child e.g. if they need to go to the toilet, if there is a fire alarm or other emergency etc.
- Get to know the parents/carers and find out from them how you can be more supportive.

Further information:

MENCAP

British Institute of Learning Disabilities

www.mencap.org.uk

www.bild.org.uk

'Invited to Belong' has been developed in partnership between Urban Saints and Youthscape.



Youthscape

www.urbansaints.org/invitedtobelong