

## Learning Disability Definition

A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life.

Individuals with a learning disability often require additional support to acquire new skills, comprehend complex information, and engage with others. It's crucial to recognise that with appropriate assistance, most individuals with learning disabilities in the UK can lead independent lives.

The extent of support necessary varies from person to person. For instance, someone with a mild learning disability might only require assistance in securing employment, while another with a severe or profound learning disability might need full-time care and support in all aspects of life, possibly compounded by physical disabilities.

Certain specific conditions, such as Down syndrome and some forms of autism, can also manifest as learning disabilities.

## Learning Difficulties

Learning disabilities are often confused with learning difficulties like dyslexia, ADHD, or dyspraxia. These difficulties encompass a range of conditions, with dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia, and dyscalculia being among the more recognised types.

Individuals may have one or a combination of these difficulties, and like learning disabilities, they can vary in severity.

Individuals may also experience both a learning disability and a learning difficulty simultaneously.

## Autism Definition

Autism, a lifelong condition, is sometimes referred to as a spectrum disorder. While it is not inherently a learning disability, approximately half of autistic individuals may also have a learning disability.

Autism is characterised by three common features that can influence an individual's social interactions, communication abilities, and sensory experiences.

Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism, typically does not entail a learning disability, although individuals may face challenges such as specific learning difficulties or anxiety.

Autism presents differently in each individual, affecting them in various ways across different environments.

Signs may include difficulty interpreting verbal and non-verbal cues, challenges in expressing emotions, sensory sensitivity, repetitive behaviors, and episodes of frustration or, in some cases, aggressive behavior. This list is not exhaustive, so consulting with a GP is advisable if concerns arise.

## **Finding Help and Support**

Each person is different, and the impact their condition has on their life will depend on many factors. These will include the severity of their condition, any additional diagnoses, such as physical disability, long term health conditions or a mental health problem, and whether they display any challenging behaviours.

**Getting support from you GP or health professional is the best step if you have any concerns.**

**For information on our support and advocacy services, please contact us on [advocacy@elfrida.com](mailto:advocacy@elfrida.com) or call 020 7359 7443.**