

# What is a Learning Disability?



## Factsheet

An equal society for every person who has a learning disability

# What is a learning disability?

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A learning disability is a significant, lifelong condition that starts before adulthood, which affects a person's development and which means that they may need help to understand information, learn skills and live independently<sup>1</sup>.

Having a learning disability means a person may take longer to learn things and often needs support to develop new skills, be aware of risk, understand complicated information and interact with other people.

Some people who have other conditions, such as; Down's syndrome and some people who have autism or dyspraxia also have a learning disability.

The level of support a person needs depends on the individual. In the UK we have used the terms *profound*, *sever*, *moderate* and *mild* to describe people who have a learning disability.

But all of this is only part of a description. It does not capture the whole person, and everything they are – a friend, a family member, a community activist, a student, a parent, an employee or employer for example. It is essential that we keep in mind all of these possibilities and support individuals who have a learning disability to be equal members of society, and to realise their full potential and goals in life.

## Key facts about learning disability in Scotland

- There are an estimated 120,000 people who have a learning disability in Scotland.
- Learning disability is lifelong and affects around 1 in 50 people.
- There are around 26,786 adults who have a learning disability known to local authorities across Scotland.
- There are 15,324 school-age children and young people identified as having an additional support need resultant from a learning disability.
- Most people who have a learning disability do not get any form of social care support.

**If you need more information please contact**

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<sup>1</sup> The Keys to Life, Scottish Government (2013 <http://www.gov.scot/resources/0042/0042389.pdf>)