

NHS Data Model and Dictionary



Type: Data Dictionary Change Notice
Reference: 1914
Version No: 1.0
Subject: Learning Disability NHS Business Definition Update
Effective Date: Immediate
Reason for Change: Change to definition
Publication Date: 2 September 2025

Background:

The NHS England Learning Disability and Autism Programme have requested that the "Learning Disability" NHS Business Definition is updated to reflect [Learning disability - applying All Our Health](#).

This Data Dictionary Change Notice (DDCN) updates the "Learning Disability" NHS Business Definition.

A short demonstration is available which describes "How to Read an NHS Data Model and Dictionary Change Request", in an easy to understand screen capture including a voice over and readable captions. This demonstration can be viewed at: https://datadictionary.nhs.uk/elearning/change_request/index.html.

Note: if the web page does not open, please copy the link and paste into the web browser. A guide to how to use the demonstration can be found at: [Demonstrations](#).

Summary of changes:

Supporting Information

[LEARNING DISABILITY](#) Changed Description

Date: 2 September 2025

Sponsor: Tomas Sanchez Lopez, Director Technology and Data Integration, Data and Analytics, NHS England

Note: New text is shown with a blue background. Deleted text is crossed out. Retired text is shown in grey. Within the Diagrams deleted classes and relationships are red, changed items are blue and new items are green.

LEARNING DISABILITY

Change to Supporting Information: Changed Description

A Learning Disability (formerly known as a Mental Handicap and referred to as an Intellectual Disability) is a PATIENT DIAGNOSIS. A Learning Disability (also known as an Intellectual Disability) is a PATIENT DIAGNOSIS.

A Learning Disability usually has a significant impact on a PERSON's life. A PERSON with a Learning Disability finds it harder than others to learn, understand and communicate. A Learning Disability may have a significant impact on a PERSON's life. A PERSON with a Learning Disability may find it harder than others to learn, understand and communicate.

A PATIENT DIAGNOSIS of a Learning Disability may result in the PATIENT having a DISABILITY.

People with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities need full-time help with every aspect of their lives, including eating, drinking, washing, dressing and toileting etc. Some PEOPLE with a Learning Disability may need help with everyday life, such as, personal care, daily living skills or dealing with finances. Other PEOPLE may need full-time care and support.

Learning Disability includes the presence of 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, with a lasting effect on development.

Further information regarding people covered by definition can be found in the document 'Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century'.

Although, from a social care perspective, an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of seventy or less is not sufficient reason for deciding if an individual should be provided with additional health and social care support, the following definition is applied within the Mental Health Services Data Set in the specific circumstance where data providers do not have an explicit data item to capture whether a PATIENT has a Learning Disability:

Someone is considered to have a Learning Disability when they function at a level of intellectual ability which is significantly lower than their chronological age. This is usually considered to be equivalent to having an IQ of seventy or less:

- Mild [Learning Disability](#) (roughly equivalent to an IQ of fifty to seventy) is comparable to the educational term 'Moderate [Learning Difficulty](#)'. It is usually caused by a combination of restricted learning and social opportunities plus a high rate of low to average intellectual ability and [Learning Disability](#) in close relatives.
- Moderate to profound [Learning Disability](#) (roughly equivalent to an IQ below fifty) is comparable to the educational term 'Severe [Learning Difficulty](#)'. It usually has a specific biological cause.

Note: A [Learning Difficulty](#) is a type of [Special Education Need](#) which affects areas of learning, such as reading, writing, spelling, mathematics etc.

Further information on [Learning Disabilities](#), can be found on the internet, for example: For further information on [Learning Disabilities](#), see the gov.uk website at: [Learning disability - applying All Our Health](#).

- [Mencap website](#)
- NHS website at: [Learning disabilities](#).

For enquiries about this Change Request, please email support.digitalservices@nhs.net