Telling people about learning disability

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Easy Read

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What this document is about



This document is about:

- what the public think about learning disability
- how we can tell people about learning disability so they understand it better.

FrameWorks UK and Mencap worked on it together.

What we did



We wanted to find out how the public think about learning disability.



We talked to lots of different people.

We looked at how their ideas are the same as, or different from, what experts know.



We wanted to know:

- What people get right
- What people get wrong or get confused about.



This document tells you what we found.

It also gives some first ideas about how to tell people about learning disability.

What is happening now



We all need good things in our lives.

Like:

- Our own home
- Somewhere to learn
- Enough money
- Our friends and family.



We all need the right support from doctors and care workers.



But many **barriers** can get in the way.

A barrier is something that makes life harder.

It is harder for many people with a learning disability to have these things.



People with a learning disability sometimes die younger than they should.

This can happen because:

- Doctors do not spot health problems
- Doctors make mistakes
- People do not get the care they need.



1 in 20 people with a learning disability have a job.

Most people with a learning disability want a job.

Not having a job can make people feel bad about themselves.

Not having a job makes it harder to afford the things you need.



There are not enough homes that are right for people with a learning disability.

This means that a lot of people:

- Can’t live by themselves
- Can’t choose where they live
- Might have to stay in hospital and not leave.

This is not right.

What people think a learning disability is



Most people do not understand what a learning disability is.

They think it only means finding school hard.

And that you only need support at school.

This is not true.



Every person with a learning disability is different.

Some people need lots of support.

Some people need less support.



Some people may need help with:

- Washing and getting dressed
- Going to the doctor
- Managing money
- Planning trips
- Getting to work.



Some people only need more time to do things by themselves.

Helping people understand learning disability



We can use **framing** to help people understand learning disability better.

Framing means making choices about how we say, draw or sign things.



We already use **framing** when we talk to people.

For example:

- Do I start with ‘hello’ or ‘hi’?
- Do I look serious or smile?
- When people ask how I am, do I share everything or just some things?



The framing choices we make change how people understand us.

They can also help people understand learning disability better.



We can frame how we tell people about learning disability so that:

- People understand learning disability better
- We get more support for the things we need.

What people get wrong or get confused about



We found 6 things that people get wrong or get confused about learning disability.

This is why we need to frame learning disability.



1. People think it is only about school

Some people think a learning disability only means finding school hard.

This hides all the other things people might find hard in life.



2. People only think about one person

Some people think disability is only about the person.

They think life will be better if we just try harder.

They do not think about how the world around us can make life hard.



3. People are not seen as equal

Some people think that a learning disability is ‘not normal.’

Some people think that a learning disability means you’re not a whole person.

This is wrong and unfair.



4. People think things are fine now

Some people think things are good enough now.

Some people think people with a learning disability do not want more from life.

This is not true.



5. People think there is not enough money

Some people think there is not enough money to help everyone.

So they think people with a learning disability will have to go without.

This is not fair.



6. People think you only matter if you earn money

Some people think you only matter if you have a job and earn money.

So they think people with a learning disability who do not work matter less.

They think helping them costs too much.

This is wrong.

What people get right



We also found 4 things that can help people understand learning disability better.



1. People can see the world is not built for everyone

People can see that there are **barriers** for people with a learning disability.

This is a good place to start.



2. People know everyone is different

People know a learning disability can be mild or more severe.

People know everyone needs different help.

This matches what experts know.



3. People know we all need friends

People know that we are all happier with friends and people around us.

Care is not enough if it leaves someone alone.

So people need the right support to make friends and keep them.



4. People know the government should help

People know the government should keep everyone safe and cared for.

So the government should pay for the support we need.

How we can tell people about learning disability



Here are some first ideas for how we can frame learning disability.

These framing choices can help people understand learning disability better.

We can test them to find out which ones work best.



1. Start with the things we all need

We all need good things in our lives.

Talk first about the things we all need. Like:

- A home
- Money to pay the bills
- Our friends and family.



Then explain why it can be harder for people with a learning disability to get these things.

This brings more people into the conversation.



2. Remind people that we all need each other

Remind people how much we need each other.

We are all someone's friend or family.

We all do better when everyone can join in.

For example: "We all need friends.

We make friends when we go out and meet people.

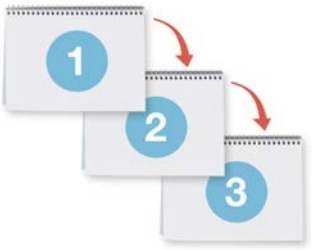
But some people with a learning disability do not get the right support to do this.

So it is harder to get out and join in.

And all of us miss out on making friends and having fun.

Whether we have a learning disability or not.

With the right support, everyone can join in."

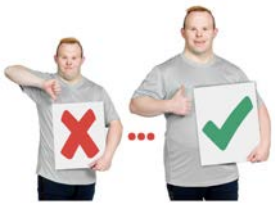


3. Explain problems step by step

Do not expect people to already understand the problems we have.

Explain things one step at a time.

Show how one thing can lead to another.



4. Show real ways to make things better

Show clear ways to make life better. Like:

- More money for care, support and housing
- More training for doctors
- More information in Easy Read.

Explain how this helps people, families and everyone

Remind people that the government should help.

For example: “We want health care that works for all of us.

We want the NHS to:

- know when someone has a learning disability
- know what extra support they need
- give them that support.

There are already ways to make this happen.

One is a list of people who have a learning disability.

This is called the Learning Disability Register.

It helps doctors know who needs extra support.

But it is not working well enough yet.

The government needs to make sure the NHS uses it.

This will help people to be more healthy.”

Things can change



Right now, most people do not understand what a learning disability is.

But this can change.



We can frame learning disability so that people understand it better.

And support the things we all need.

Things like:

- Our own home
- Somewhere to learn
- Enough money
- Our friends and family.



Email Sarah.Cowen-Rivers@mencap.org.uk if you would like to find out more.

About this guide

This guide goes with a longer report: “How people think about learning disability: Opportunities and challenges for how to communicate about learning disability” (2026).

The report was written by Maria Castellina, Charlotte Shaw and Angeliki Lampropoulou.

Thank you

Mencap has a lived experience advisory group.

This group gave their ideas and advice.

Their ideas made the report better.

Their ideas made the guide better.

We want to say a big thank you to them.

About FrameWorks UK

FrameWorks UK is an organisation.

We help charities and other organisations talk about important things in the world.

For example:

– learning
– poverty
– mental health.

We help them find the best way to tell people about important things.

Find out more

You can visit our website: frameworksuk.org

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