

Formal Definitions of Learning Disability

A range of terms are often used to refer to learning disability such as 'intellectual disability' and 'learning difficulty'. The Challenging Behaviour Foundation uses the term 'Learning Disability' because it is widely understood and used in many policy documents within the UK.

Three widely used definitions of learning disability are:

1. Valuing People (HM Government, 2001, p. 14):

'Learning disability includes the presence of:

- *A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information in learning new skills (impaired intelligence), with:*
- *A reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning),*
- *Which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development'*

2. DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2013)

The DSM-V definition of 'Intellectual Disability' refers to limited functioning in three areas:

- Social skills (e.g. communicating with others)
- Conceptual skills (e.g. reading and writing ability)
- Practical ability (e.g. clothing/bathing one's self)

Source:

<http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/Intellectual%20Disability%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

3. ICD-10 (International Classification of Diseases, 2010)

'...a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind, which is especially characterised by impairment of skills manifested during the developmental period, which contribute to the overall level of intelligence, i.e. cognitive, language, motor and social abilities.'

The ICD-10 classification also listed 'Learning Disabilities' under the title of 'Mental Retardation'. The latest edition, ICD-11, will be published in 2015 and will no longer use the term 'mental retardation', but 'Intellectual Disability'.

For further definitions of 'learning disability', please see below for the factsheets produced by BILD and the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities.

<http://www.bild.org.uk/information/factsheets/>

<http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/help-information/learning-disability-a-z/l/learning-disabilities/>