

Learning (intellectual) disability

- Defined clinically (and contentiously) by IQ 70 or below – the bottom 2.5% of the population
- Defined practically by a global impairment in intellectual function so that thinking, reasoning, literacy, learning, socialising, self-management are all affected to a degree that means most need input from services of some kind
- Present from birth (or acquired by brain trauma/infection before age 18 when ‘the mind’ is said to have fully developed)
- Can be genetic such as Down’s Syndrome, Williams Syndrome, or due to pre birth difficulties or birth injury
- Most people were institutionalised in the previous century but these were gradually closed during the 1980s & 90s
- People who lived there were often abused, neglected, & led impoverished lives

From NHS Choices:

Mild, moderate or severe learning disability

A learning disability can be mild, moderate or severe. Some people with a mild learning disability can talk easily and look after themselves, but take a bit longer than usual to learn new skills. Others may not be able to communicate at all and have more than one disability (see [Profound and multiple learning disability](#), below).

A learning disability is not the same as a learning difficulty or mental illness. Consultant paediatrician Dr Martin Ward Platt says: "It can be very confusing," he says, pointing out that the term "learning difficulties" is used by some people to cover the whole range of learning disabilities.

"It is easy to give the impression, by using a term like 'learning difficulties', that a child has less of a disability than they really do," says Dr Ward Platt.

Some children with learning disabilities grow up to be quite independent, while others need help with everyday tasks, such as washing or getting dressed, for their whole lives. It depends on their abilities.

The Royal Earlswood hospital, Surrey:



Ward over-crowding:

