

Learning disability and communication

This brief factsheet highlights some of the main impacts of learning disability on communication.

It identifies practical action you can take to remove barriers to participation that people with learning disability may face.

There is wide variation in the degree and nature of learning disability.

Most people with a learning disability will have some communication difficulties. But the way each person communicates will differ greatly.

People with a learning disability may not want to engage in situations where there are too many people or where there are people they do not know.

They might find it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time. They may require support to:

- follow instructions
- understand complex language
- write or use a pen
- hear what a speaker is saying
- see a PowerPoint presentation.

Some people with a learning disability may be keen to speak in public. They may use alternative forms of communication, such as a communication book or other visual aid.

Key actions

You can enable a person with a learning disability to participate more fully by:

- finding out what support a person requires
- giving the person time to take in information and express their views
- recognising the way the individual expresses themselves and the tools they use to do so
- keeping verbal and written information clear and simple
- supplying written information in advance
- making sure the person is accompanied by the supporter of their choice.

Further information:

SCLD (Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability) (www.sclld.org.uk)

People First (Scotland) (www.peoplefirstscotland.org)

Capability Scotland (www.capability-scotland.org.uk)