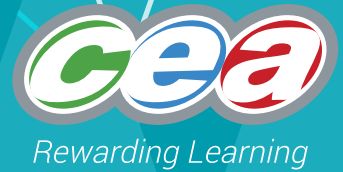


FACTFILE:

GCSE

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

UNIT 2: WORKING IN THE HEALTH,  
SOCIAL CARE AND EARLY YEARS SECTORS



## Meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities

### Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- Identify the main service user groups in the health, social care and early years sectors:
  - children and families;
  - older people;
  - people with mental health difficulties;
  - people with learning disabilities;
  - people with physical disabilities;
  - people with chronic illnesses; and
  - people with dementia; and
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of each service user groups' particular needs:
  - physical;
  - intellectual;
  - emotional; and
  - social.
- analyse how integrated health, social care and early years services meet service user groups' needs:
  - statutory sector
    - GP services;
    - hospitals;
    - social services;
    - day centres; and
    - nursery schools.
  - independent sector
    - care homes;
    - private day centres;
    - private practitioners;
    - crèches; and
    - voluntary organisations, for example, Action on Hearing Loss, Age NI, Marie Curie, Barnardo's, Mencap, Praxis, or RNIB; and
  - informal sector
    - partner;
    - family;
    - friends; and
    - neighbours; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of services in meeting the needs of service users.

## Needs

All individuals have needs or essential requirements for their health and well-being. These can be classified as physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs.

Physical needs	Intellectual needs	Emotional needs	Social needs
Nutrition	Stimulation	Sense of belonging	Contact with other people
Hygiene	Knowledge	Sense of control over one's life/sense of autonomy	Social interaction outside the family
Exercise/movement/mobility	Opportunities to learn	Feeling valued and cared for	Relationships with family and friends
Shelter/warmth/housing		Positive self-concept/need for self confidence	

Some of these needs are common to all individuals but as they pass through the life stages and experience life changes these needs may change. Most adults are able to meet some of their needs but other individuals have more specific needs and may require support from health, social care and early years services to meet these needs.

**This Fact File focuses on the particular needs of people with learning disabilities.**

## Identifying and meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities

Having a learning disability means that an individual finds it challenging to learn some life skills. There are a range of learning disabilities that affect individuals very differently and there is a difference between having a learning disability and a specific learning difficulty. Dyslexia, for example, is a specific learning difficulty that causes problems with reading and writing only, so is classed as a learning difficulty not a learning disability. According to Mencap a learning disability is 'a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life' (Mencap 2017). There are a number of conditions associated with learning disability including Down's syndrome, William's syndrome, autism and cerebral palsy.

### Activity

Access Mencap's website on the link below and make notes on the four conditions listed above that can cause learning disabilities. You should note that not everyone with these conditions has a learning disability.

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/learning-disability-and-conditions>

Individuals with learning disabilities vary greatly in their needs and in the level of support they require to meet them. Many people with learning disabilities live quite independent lives, perhaps with some support from health and care services and family and friends, whilst others may need a great deal of support and care. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) often have additional sensory and physical disabilities and complex health needs as well as their profound learning disability; they have great difficulty communicating and some have behaviours which are challenging for their carers. They need support with most aspects of daily living.

Watch the video 'Meet the People' at the link below to meet some individuals with PMLD.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3v8jfr2ztSQ>

## The needs of people with learning disabilities

The tables below outline examples of the particular needs of people with learning disabilities and some of the challenges they face in meeting these needs.

### Physical needs

<b>Nutrition</b>	People with learning disabilities may need support with shopping and cooking and with understanding the difference between a healthy diet and an unhealthy diet as well as why a healthy diet is important. Some people with PMLD may struggle to swallow foods and will need a special diet of soft foods; many also need help with feeding because of their physical disabilities.
<b>Exercise and mobility</b>	People with learning disabilities may enjoy exercise but some may need someone to go with them, for example, to the local swimming pool. People with PMLD may have limited mobility due to their physical problems.
<b>Medical care</b>	Some conditions associated with learning disability also cause individuals to require additional medical care, for example, people with Down's syndrome are prone to heart disorders, thyroid problems and recurring infections and people with William's syndrome also have cardiovascular problems that require specialist medical care.
<b>Personal hygiene</b>	Some people with learning disabilities may need some support and encouragement with personal hygiene, for example, with bathing or showering and keeping their clothes clean, whilst those with PMLD will usually need someone to do these tasks with them and for them.
<b>Safety</b>	People with learning disabilities may be vulnerable to accidents and incidents that put their physical safety at risk, for example, burning themselves when cooking or taking too much medication if unsupervised.

### Intellectual needs

<b>Stimulation</b>	People with learning disabilities need stimulating activities that suit their individual level of understanding.
<b>Knowledge of illness or condition</b>	People with learning disabilities may need health and social care practitioners to explain an illness or condition and its treatment to them in language they can easily understand.
<b>Opportunity to learn new skills</b>	People with learning disabilities may take more time than others to learn new skills but should be given as many opportunities to do so as possible- the range of skills will depend very much on the abilities of each individual.

### Emotional needs

<b>Sense of autonomy</b>	People with learning disabilities may feel they have no control over what is happening to them, for example, a young adult with Down's syndrome may feel he or she should be able to make more decisions about daily life and activities.
<b>Sense of belonging</b>	People with learning disabilities may struggle to experience a sense of belonging if people ignore them or don't take time to communicate with them in a way that meets their needs.
<b>Feeling cared for</b>	People with learning disabilities need to feel cared for and this requires people to communicate with them in a way that shows love and support even if they seem unable to reciprocate, for example, as a result of autism.

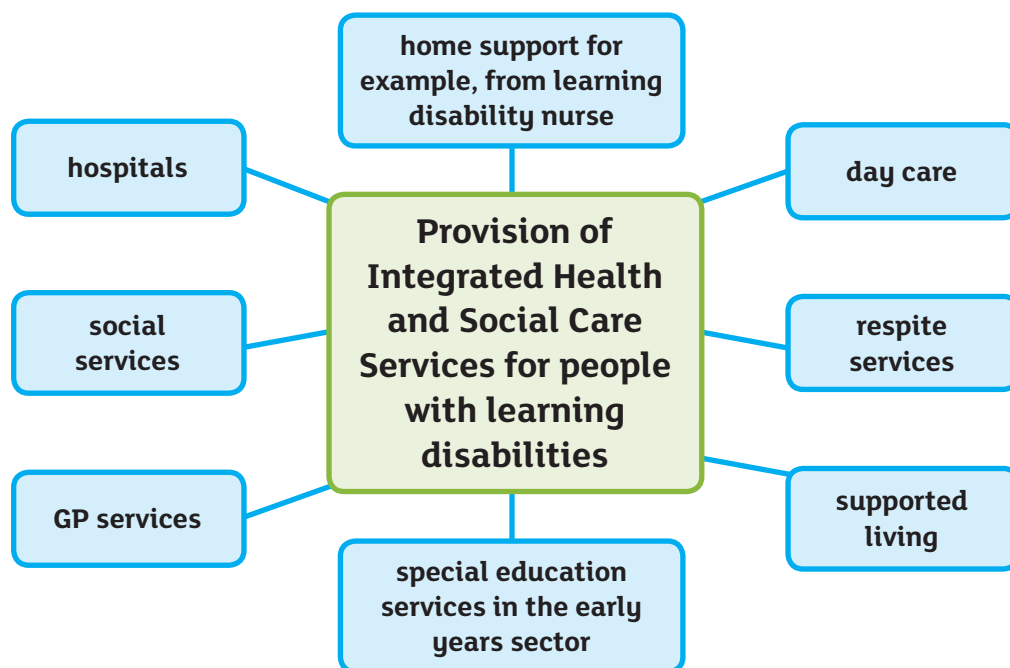
### Social needs

<b>Communication</b>	Learning disabilities make it difficult for people to communicate with others, for example people with PMLD may have to use noises and facial expressions rather than speech to communicate.
<b>Social interaction outside the family</b>	People with learning disabilities may face challenges interacting with others outside of the family circle as people may sometimes avoid them or struggle to understand them.
<b>Relationships</b>	It may be difficult for some people with learning disabilities to establish new relationships, for example people with autism often struggle to interact with other people and find communicating with new people particularly challenging.

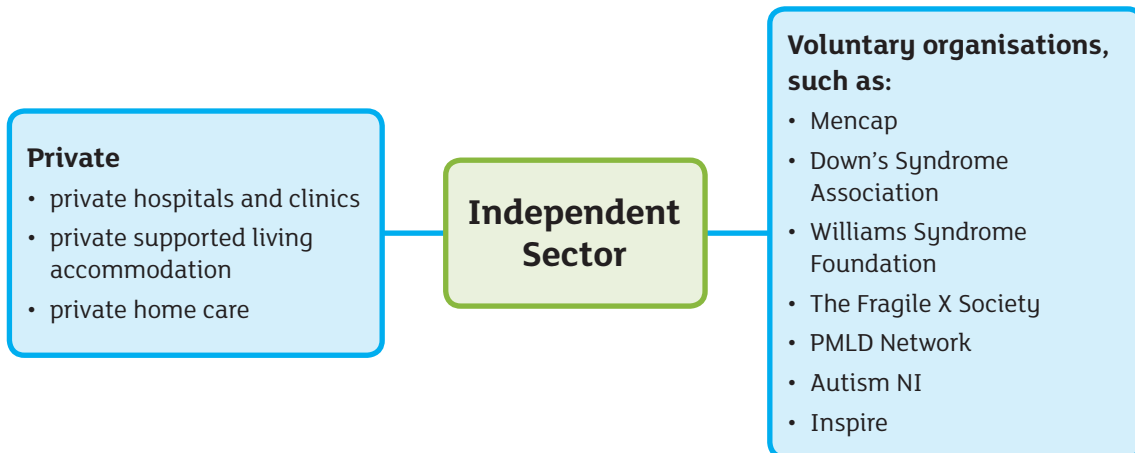
### Provision of integrated health and social care services

A wide range of services are available to help meet the needs of people with learning disabilities. These services are provided by three main sectors.

#### Statutory Sector



## Independent Sector



## Informal Sector



- **The statutory sector** – these are services offered by government organisations like the Health and Social Care Trusts, including both health and social services. These services are mainly free at the point of delivery but paid for indirectly through taxes and national insurance contributions. There are five main health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland which offer a range of services.

## Activity

Find out which trust area you live in, select the relevant website from the list below, click on 'Our services', drop down to 'learning disability services' and read about the wide range of services offered.

<http://www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/>

<http://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/>

<http://www.setrust.hscni.net/>

<http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/>

<http://www.westerntrust.hscni.net/>

The Education Authority in Northern Ireland also has a responsibility to meet the needs of children with learning disabilities in education. This may be in a mainstream school or a special school. You can read more about the rights of children with learning disabilities in the education system at the link below

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/schools-learning-and-development/special-educational-needs>

- **The independent sector** includes both private and voluntary services.  
**Private services** are usually run as a business by an individual or an organisation. They charge for their services and aim to make a profit, though the Trusts often pay for individual service users. Examples of such services include private care homes or supported living accommodation, private day care and therapy providers and private practitioners who offer complementary therapies such as reflexology, massage or aromatherapy.  
**Voluntary organisations** are run on a non-profit making basis and many depend on donations and other fund raising events to cover their costs. Whilst they usually have some paid staff many depend on volunteers to deliver their services.

### Activity

Divide into groups, access one of the websites below and make notes on how the organisation supports people with learning disabilities. Share your findings with the class group.

<https://www.inspirewellbeing.org/disabilityservices/our-services>

<http://autismni.org>

<http://www.fragilex.org.uk>

<http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/northern-ireland/>

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/northern-ireland>

- **The informal sector** is support and care given by family members, partners, friends and neighbours. They provide care and support in a range of ways, for example, helping with daily tasks, helping them manage their finances, accompanying individuals with learning disabilities to appointments, engaging in social activities with them or simply checking in with them to see if they are coping.

## How integrated health and social care services meet the needs of people with learning disabilities

Some examples of how the needs of people with learning disabilities can be met are outlined in the tables below and you can add other examples.

### Physical needs

<b>Nutrition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• day centres for people with learning disabilities usually provide a healthy lunch</li> <li>• a support worker in supported living accommodation could help an individual with a learning disability to shop and prepare meals</li> <li>• assistance from the informal sector- friends, family members and neighbours may help to shop for food, prepare meals or invite the individual with a learning disability to share meals with them</li> </ul>
<b>Exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of activities like aerobics in day centres for people with learning disabilities in the statutory and voluntary sectors</li> <li>• family and friends going out for a walk or going to a local leisure centre with someone with a learning disability</li> </ul>
<b>Medical care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of specialist medical care for conditions linked to learning disability, for example, a specialist working with heart conditions in people with Down's syndrome</li> </ul>
<b>Personal hygiene</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a support worker encouraging regular bathing or showering in supported living accommodation for people with learning disabilities</li> <li>• staff washing, bathing or showering people with profound learning disabilities in a hospital or care home</li> </ul>
<b>Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff regularly checking on adults with Down's syndrome in supported living accommodation</li> <li>• support workers in a day centre taking adults with learning disabilities out and explaining pedestrian safety to the them, for example, the safe use of a pedestrian crossing</li> </ul>





### Intellectual needs

<b>Stimulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of a range of stimulating activities such as crafts in a day centre</li> <li>• provision of specialist environments like sensory rooms or sensory gardens in learning disability hospitals or care homes</li> <li>• provisions of a range of therapies like music therapy</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge of condition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of information about illness or medical condition using language service users with learning disabilities can understand</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunity to learn new skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of opportunities to learn new skills provided by the voluntary sector, for example, ICT skills</li> <li>• provision of training for work by a learning disability OT or nurse</li> </ul>

### Emotional needs

<b>Sense of autonomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of support workers by social services to enable service users with learning disabilities to live as independently as possible</li> <li>• support from family, friends and neighbours to support service users to undertake everyday activities</li> <li>• provision of activities to help the individuals with PMLD to gain some control over their environment, for example, switching on and off lights and sounds in a sensory room</li> <li>• provision of supported living accommodation by the voluntary sector, for example by Inspire, to enable service users to live as independently as possible</li> <li>• by professionals listening and taking into account the service users' wishes and involving them in decisions about their care</li> <li>• provision of programmes to enable service users to gain suitable employment and become more independent by OT</li> </ul>
<b>Sense of belonging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by family members making people with learning disabilities feel valued and wanted, for example involving them in family celebrations like birthdays and weddings</li> <li>• provision of supported living accommodation where support workers encourage service users to get to know each other</li> </ul>
<b>Feeling cared for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a social worker supporting a couple with learning disabilities to live together in a loving relationship</li> <li>• provision of a befriending service by a voluntary organisation</li> <li>• support from family, friends and neighbours who take time to listen to an individual's wishes and priorities</li> </ul>



## Social needs

<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by early years specialists using a simple sign and symbol language called Makaton to communicate with children with learning disabilities</li> <li>• by family and friends taking time to listen to the individual with a learning disability</li> <li>• by nurses using picture boards to communicate with adults with profound learning disabilities in a hospital</li> <li>• by home care workers being responsive to gestures and facial expressions in adults who have no speech due to their learning disability</li> </ul>
<b>Social interaction outside the family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of group activities by voluntary organisations</li> <li>• provision of a range of activities in day centres and supported living accommodation</li> <li>• provision of sport and leisure activities such as swimming and crafts by a voluntary sector organisation</li> <li>• by family, friends and neighbours accompanying an individual with learning disabilities to community events</li> <li>• opportunities to interact with others in supported living accommodation</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships with family and friends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• through visiting hours in a learning disability hospital</li> <li>• provision of support groups and activities, for example lunch clubs by voluntary organisations</li> <li>• by family members and partners encouraging people with learning disabilities to keep in touch with friends by providing transport, accompanying them on visits or to social activities</li> </ul>

## Activity

Watch the following You Tube clips and take part in a group discussion on how the needs of people with learning disabilities are being met.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLMTeNndQck>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8YChA9laFk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCsatqWgXV8>

## Evaluate the effectiveness of services in meeting the needs of service users

### Activity

- (a) Choose any service from the statutory or independent sector that helps meet the needs of people with learning disabilities.

Complete the table below to identify the needs this service helps to meet and explain how it does this. Note: the service may not meet all four types of need.

#### Name of service

Type of need	Needs	How this service helps to meet this need
Physical		
Intellectual		
Emotional		
Social		

Your table shows you how the service helps to meet needs, but you now need to evaluate how effective the service is in doing so. To evaluate means to weigh up how well the service meets the needs.

Things you may consider:

- Which needs do you think this service meets particularly well and why?
- Are there any needs the service could do more to meet or that it does not meet at all?
- What are the barriers to the service meeting needs effectively? You could consider some of the barriers to accessing services listed in the next part of the unit specification, for example, lack of resources.

- (b) Evaluate the effectiveness of the informal sector by considering the following case study:

Jimmy, aged 38, has Down's syndrome. He has recently moved in with his sister Kirstie and her family as their mother, whom he lived with, died suddenly. Kirstie has two teenage sons who adore Jimmy but she and her husband John are worried about how this new situation will work out.

- Which of Jimmy's needs can Kirstie and her family contribute to meeting?
- Evaluate how effective the family might be in meeting Jimmy's needs.

### References

Mencap, 2017, available at [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

