

# Learning Difficulties vs Learning Disability

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There is currently a debate about if learning difficulties and learning disability are the same. Some people think that they are the same, some people think they are interrelated and the others think they are completely different. These terms are often used in a negative way but with constant new research, understanding and support, we can make this positive for all.

According to the learning disabilities website, learning difficulties and disabilities are completely different but it is a very complicated issue to understand. Many people with a learning difficulty or disability are defined as having a 'hidden disability'. This means that the condition is not immediately obvious to others, or to the person themselves.

An example of a non-hidden/obvious disability is people with Downs Syndrome as facial features are more obvious.

General intelligence in a person is not affected by any learning difficulty they have. However, someone with a learning disability has an overall cognitive impairment. Individuals with a cognitive impairment has difficulty with remembering, concentrating, decision-making or learning new things. This can range from very mild to very severe and affects different people in different ways.

What many people may not understand is that individuals with learning (and physical) difficulties/differences have their own life and can achieve anything. We (and many advisory groups around the UK) are constantly trying/working to break the stigma that learning disabilities and difficulties has and is viewed by society. Some examples of this are independent living, gaining employment, owning/driving a car, socialising/making friends and on public transport.

Examples of specific learning difficulties are dyspraxia, dyslexia and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Each individuals circumstances and severity of the condition will determine what kind and how much support they receive. Although we have come a long way in understanding and stigma, we still have a long way to go but we will eventually get there with progress.