

Learning Disability Month

#CelebrateDiversity

creative
SUPPORT

June 2021

Welcome to our Learning Disability Month newsletter!

Throughout June, we have been sharing lots of articles and hosting 'social media takeovers' from service users across the country on our social media and website to help people better understand learning disabilities.

Approximately 1.2 million people in England have a learning disability. This is around 2.2% of all adults and 2.5% of all children. By sharing information about the challenges that people with learning disabilities may face, we hope to help support and empower people in the Creative Support community and beyond.

Although learning disabilities may be common, lots of us may not be aware of the facts surrounding learning disabilities, such as what causes them or how to best support people with one. Everyone is different and unique: the causes of learning disabilities vary from one person to the next, and while certain forms of care and support might work for some, they may not work for others. It's about listening and learning from people who have a learning disability and having a person-centred approach for everyone as an individual.

There is still time to share your story!
Contact marketing@creativesupport.co.uk for more information.



This newsletter is full of information and stories from people at Creative Support, including interviews with people about their lives! We'll also be including articles on things such as mate crime and modern day slavery as these are topics that people may not know too much about, but which disproportionately affect people with learning disabilities.

#CelebrateDiversity #LearningDisability

What is a Learning Disability?

A learning disability is something which affects people's ability to learn new skills, communicate, and understand information. There are around 1.5 million people in the UK living with a learning disability diagnosis. Like most things, they affect everyone differently, and they don't stop people from living happy and healthy lives with the right support and understanding.

Sometimes, there is no known cause for someone having a learning disability, however usually it is the result of a particular event, which affects the development of the brain. This can happen during pregnancy, birth, or in early childhood. Some causes include:

- The mother becoming ill during pregnancy
- Complications during birth that impact oxygen getting to the baby's brain
- Inheriting certain genes which make a learning disability more likely. This is known as 'Inherited Learning Disability'
- Childhood illnesses such as Meningitis
- Premature birth

Learning disabilities often go hand-in-hand with other conditions, for example, people with Down's syndrome will also have a learning disability. Also, 30% of people with epilepsy have a learning disability and some people with cerebral palsy also have one too. Other associated conditions include Williams syndrome, autism, Fragile X syndrome, Global Development Delay and SYNGAP1.



Many people will have personal experiences of learning disabilities, either through having one themselves, through someone they support, or through a friend or family member. Despite this, there are still many outdated misconceptions about learning disabilities. It's important to understand that learning disabilities are different for everyone who lives with one. Everyone deserves to be happy, and to be treated like an individual, and this includes how they are supported.

Taking the time to learn more about learning disabilities, learning exactly what they are and how they differ from person to person will go a long way to better support and empower people with learning disabilities in our Creative Support community and beyond!

There are three different levels of learning disability - mild, moderate and severe. Each affect people's IQ and ways of living to different degrees....

Mild

People with a mild learning disability can usually live independent lives, but may require a little more time to understand or learn things. They would usually have an IQ of between 50-70 (the national average being 90-109). Some people with a mild learning disability may not be able to communicate verbally, but may communicate in another way instead, such as through sign language, writing, using AAC apps, or communication cards - read more about communication methods on page 7!

Moderate

People with a moderate learning disability can usually communicate with other people, but may struggle to understand more complex things. They may also live independent lives but might need a bit of additional support or prompting to carry out certain lifestyle tasks, such as managing money or looking after their health. People with a moderate learning disability usually have an IQ of between 35-49. Approximately 10% of people with a learning disability fall into this category.

Severe

People with a severe learning disability are less likely to be able to communicate than others easily, but can usually understand what people are saying to them. They may also have delayed development, such as moving or walking if they're able to. People with a severe learning disability usually have an IQ of between 20-34. They will likely need full time support and have more day-to-day care needs than others, such as with eating or maintaining personal hygiene.

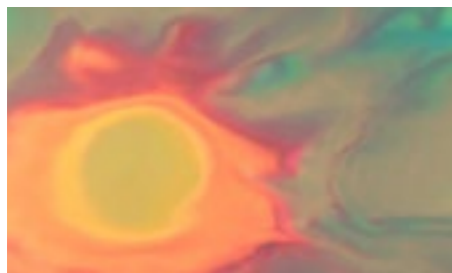
People can also have **Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities** (PMLD), which means that they have a severe learning disability or a combination of learning disabilities. They may require full time support throughout their lives, similar to people with a severe learning disability. Around 1-2% of people with a learning disability fall into this category. People with PMLD usually have an IQ of less than 20.

What is the difference between a learning disability and a learning difficulty?

There is some confusion about the difference between a learning **disability** and a learning **difficulty**. As we explained in the previous article, a learning disability is something which affects people's ability to learn new skills, communicate and understand information. They are caused by something which has affected the brain's development either before, during, or after birth. Learning disabilities affect people's IQ and their score will determine if someone has a mild, moderate, severe, or profound learning disability.

A learning difficulty affects people's ability to process and understand information and can make learning specific things difficult. However, the difference is that a learning difficulty usually doesn't affect people's IQ. Examples of learning difficulties include ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia. Also, there is no known cause of learning difficulties, but it is presumed likely a combination of genetic and environmental factors.

Creativity Showcase



Nikk

"I find it really relaxing and my hope is that it will have the same effect on other people."

Nikk has been creating works of art for a long time following his BA (hons) in Fine Art from The University of Reading, that he completed many years ago. He now creates art currently as a hobby and for therapy.

His current artworks are a result of wanting to feel calmer and less anxious. He has been exploring this through making colourful video art with hopefully a hypnotic feel to it.

"I needed more colour in my life, after a difficult time. My art has been very therapeutic for me personally and it is something I can be really proud of."

Nikk has collected his videos on his website, which he hopes will help other people that come across it, as well as it being a platform for him store and showcase his artworks. Nikk and his artistic flair have also been a great help to Rose Buddies as he has been able to create art for our social media and jazz up post created by us.

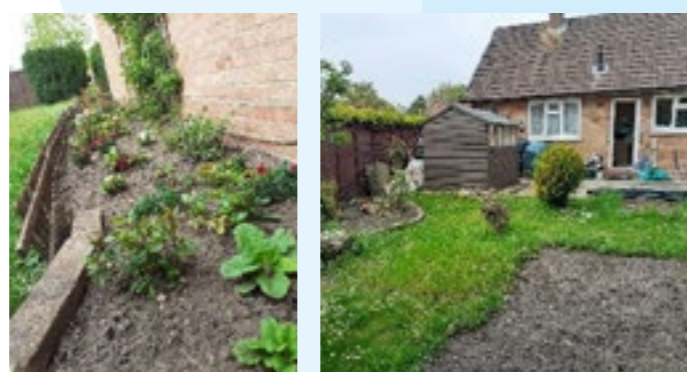


Joe

Joe's garden is his canvas and he is constantly maintaining it, he is very proud of his garden and so he should be! However, he insists that *"there is still plenty to do."*

Joe has worked really hard on his garden for the last 10 years, but especially during lockdown, and it really shows!

In that time, Joe, with the occasional help of some family, has removed conifer trees, built new fences, made flower beds, vegetable patches and helped laid bases for his shed and the new green house which is yet to be put up. His garden project started as a little flower bed along the side of his house but has now blossomed.



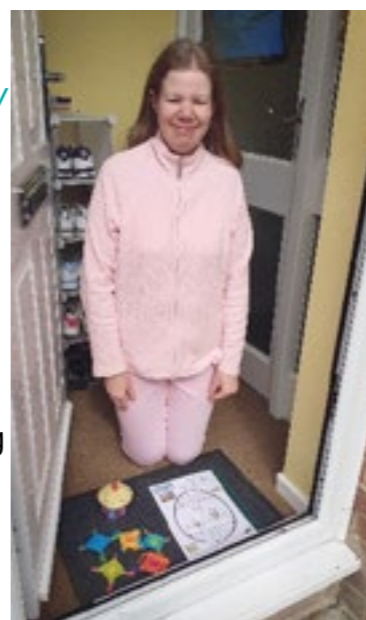
All of this at the ripe old age of 76, but he shows no signs of slowing down!

Joe also collects rain water in two big water butts that he uses to water his plants and is part of a local scheme that responsibly disposes of garden waste! He has also used some of his produce in his cooking, including his famous tomato chutney.

Hannah

"Arts and crafts really make me happy and have also helped keep my mind busy."

Hannah absolutely loves being creative and has a real passion for learning new ways of creating art! Hannah was named the winner of the Easter art competition organised by the Rose Buddies, with her brilliant design!



Hannah has also used her creative skills to make others happy too. For years she has made Birthday cards and Christmas cards for her family, friends and colleagues at work! She even makes presents too!



Martin

"I meet a lot of different kinds of people, and this has really helped boost my confidence."

Since 2016 Martin has been going to a creative arts centre called The Rising Sun. They have put together a variety of performances over the years including magic shows, comedy nights, plays, the Christmas panto and a summer production called 'Here comes the sun'. Martin really enjoys attending The Rising sun, and missed it immensely during the lockdown.

When asked what his favourite things about it, he replied: *"The fact that it lets you be creative and learn lots of new skills"* and *"Bob"* (a model of a giant at the creative arts centre.)

Lee

"I have Lego in every room in my house!"

Lee is a Lego expert!

One of Lee's prize pieces is a giant model of Tower Bridge in London. It's so big that it took him 13 days, 6 hours and 44 minutes to complete.

Lee is a proud employee of Sainsburys and has worked there for 21 years.

"When we won Store of the Year a while back, they said I played a big part in it, so to say thank you they paid for me to have a day trip to Legoland!"



Phillip

"I cannot wait until The Rising Sun can open up again properly,"

Phillip has also been going to The Rising Sun since 2010. He has been involved in tons of performances, and learned a lot over the years and has recently been learning about the effects of global warming on the environment.

Some of his favourite acts have been: Aladdin, Robin Hood, The Wizard of Oz and the magic shows.

His performances have taught him a huge number of skills, but have also helped him in other groups and organisations that he is involved with, as he now feels more confident in speaking up and sharing his opinion.



Be a good communicator with people who have learning disabilities



There are many ways that a person with a learning disability can communicate with the people around them - the main thing to remember, is to follow the lead from the person you are communicating with. Be prepared to use different tools and methods to help you understand and be understood.

For those who are able to communicate verbally, try your best to use accessible language and avoid jargon or long words that might be hard to understand. There are also other techniques available that can be used to help, such as...

Makaton

Makaton is a language that uses signs, symbols and speech. It is used combined with verbal communication, meaning that it can help those who use it to develop their speech. There are currently over 1 million people in the UK who use it, from children and adults with learning and communication disabilities, to their friends, family and support networks.



Hello/ Hi



Shalom



Namaste



Al Salam Allicoom

AAC apps

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is a blanket term for communication methods used in addition or as a replacement of speech or writing. There are many AAC apps now available, which can be downloaded onto your phone or tablet such as **TouchChat**, **Proloquo2Go**, **QuickTalk AAC** or **SonoFlex**.

Using photos, symbols and text, they allow the user to take ownership over how they communicate with others.

Communication Cards

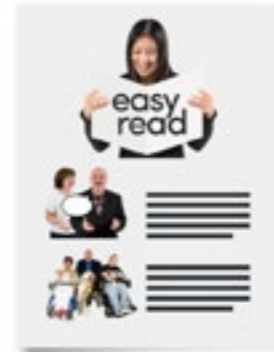
For those who may prefer non-digital methods, communication cards are an accessible way for people to express themselves. Typically around the size of a credit card, they include images, words and phrases, and are much easier to use when out and about than charts and books.



These alternative forms of communication can transform the lives of those with little or no ability to speak verbally, by giving them a chance to express their thoughts, feelings and needs independently.

A Guide to Easy Read

'Easy Read' text is designed to be accessible for people with conditions that impact their ability to process information



It is becoming increasingly common to find Easy Read versions of documents such as policies, newsletters and support plans. They play an important role in promoting the independence of people who need them. Easy Read does, however, assume some level of reading ability, so it is important to be aware that things like audio, video or face-to-face support might be required too.

Easy Read Top Tips

Content

Think first about who the document is intended for, and what are the most important bits of information that they need to know. It can help to create a bullet point plan of what you need to include before you get started.

Layout

Keep it short - that includes sentences, paragraphs, and the document in its entirety. Present pictures on the left that reflect the text on the right.

Text

Use sans serif fonts such as Arial, Helvetica or FS Me, which are specifically designed to be easy to read. Text should be a minimum size of 16 and make sure blocks of text aren't hyphenated.

Try to avoid using long or complex words, and if you do need to, highlight the word and explain its meaning.

Colour

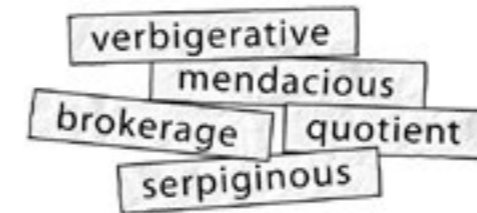
Easy Read doesn't have to be all black and white! Colour can help portray a message too, just make sure you use clear, contrasting colours, which will be easier to read.

Images

The images you chose should help portray your message, so make sure they are a good size and are in high resolution (not blurry!). Don't use too many on each page to help maintain clarity.

Ask for help if you need it!

Creating an Easy Read document can take time to perfect. A great tip is to seek advice from someone with a learning disability and ask for their opinion - perhaps you know of a service user who would like to help you!



If you would like to view an easy read version of this newsletter, contact marketing@creativesupport.co.uk

Mate Crime

Mate crime is a form of abuse, just like emotional or physical abuse, which can have devastating consequences. Mate crime is when someone befriends someone and takes advantage of them for their own gain. This could be to steal money, stay at their home, or involve them in things that make them uncomfortable. It is a really serious form of abuse and can have distressing effects on the person taken advantage of.

Having a learning disability can make a person more likely to be vulnerable to mate crime, as people can take advantage of their trust. It can sometimes take a while for people with learning disabilities to report mate crime as they worry they will lose their friends, making them less willing to talk about it to their support network.



*Photos created by Creative Together members

Similar to a hate crime, mate crimes can be reported to the police. It is a horrible thing for someone to go through and they may need support both during and afterwards, especially if they're afraid to speak up about their situation.

Mate crime can begin with genuine friendship but then lead onto the exploitation of a person as time goes on. If you feel that someone you know or support is being taken advantage of in this way, please act upon this and help protect the person from further upset. Encourage the person to speak to trusted friends, family, or support network as soon as possible, ensuring they know they have done nothing wrong and they are not at fault.

Mate crime can worsen over time, so it's important to be aware of the tell-tale signs. Some of these signs can include:

- A change or increase in social activities, and anxiety if they are unable to attend.
- Lack of money, phone credit or food, when they usually are in good supplies.
- A new friend stays over for periods of time without contributing to the household.
- Weight loss, low mood or increased anxiety.
- Missing possessions or selling items.
- Spending all their time with their new 'friend' or friendship group.
- Unexplained injuries.
- Secretive behaviour and being reluctant to discuss these changes.

You can read more information about mate crime and find support available here:

Safe Places
Safeguarding Adults
Learning Disability Today
Manchester Safeguarding Partnership
CPS

TW - this article includes content you may find distressing.

Modern Slavery

People may think that since the abolition of slavery in the UK in 1833 that it isn't a serious issue anymore. Unfortunately this is not the case. Modern slavery is a very real issue which affects over 13,000 people in the UK every year. There have been high profile cases of slavery across the UK in recent years and many of these cases involve people enslaving people with learning disabilities or support needs.

According to the independent anti-slavery commission, modern slavery is an umbrella term which includes slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, and human trafficking. It explains that: "Victims of modern slavery are unable to leave their situation of exploitation, controlled by threats, punishment, violence, coercion and deception. Slavery violates human rights, denying people of their right to life, freedom, and security."

People who enslave others usually target people who are vulnerable, including people with learning disabilities, mental health needs, people who are homeless, or a combination of the three. As there is a large percentage of people who are homeless who have additional needs, these people are usually key targets.

According to a study done by the University of Bristol in 2019, 80% of homeless people self-reported a mental health issue and 41% reported long-term physical health problems. In this same study, they found that people with a learning disability represent a minimum of 5.6% of the homeless population, and in some areas across the UK, this number reaches up to 39%. In the general population, people with learning disabilities represent between 2.5% and 3.5% of the country which shows how prevalent homelessness is for people with a learning disability. This sadly draws slavers in and they will specifically target homeless people with support needs, knowing their increased vulnerability will make them easier to enslave.

In one case from 2017 for example, a family in Lincolnshire were found to have been keeping 18 men with various support needs as slaves for their businesses. According to an article in The Independent, the family would find people living on the streets, in hostels and shelters, offering them food and accommodation in return for work, but then kept the men financially trapped and under their control.

In another case in Nottingham, a 24-year-old woman with learning disabilities was enslaved by two people for months after being catfished (*catfishing: the act of creating a false identity to lure people in online*). The detective who worked on the case said "It is hard to believe that this happened in a normal house, in a normal street where families live. They hid in plain sight. Modern slavery can take many forms, not just forced labour or domestic servitude. We would ask that people are vigilant to this kind of thing and help those who are being kept against their will by contacting the police."

Modern slavery is a massive issue in society, and specifically for people with learning disabilities or other support needs. It might not always be visible or talked about in the media, but by staying vigilant and continuing conversations about it, can help spread awareness, and potentially help people spot warning signs in service users, friends, and family.

Find more information and support related to this issue on the links below. Please note, that they may include upsetting details.

University of Bristol study
The Ann Craft Trust
UK Gov's 2020 report on modern slavery
BBC
Disability News Service

Amy - Badge Making Extraordinaire!

Amy in Doncaster recently took part in an exciting competition run by Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals to design a special badge for their Learning Disability Ambassador Team. Amy was one of the joint winners for her incredibly beautiful design which will now be used by the team!

The badge will be worn by the team to help patients with learning disabilities identify staff members who have additional training and can better support them during their time at the hospital. It also helps other staff recognize the ambassadors and ask them for advice on how to better support patients with additional needs.



We spoke with Amy about designing the badge and what she did with the prize money!

Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I have been with Creative Support at Grove Court since it opened around 5-6 years ago. I like singing, dancing, drawing, cooking, baking, and making things like birthday cards.

Can you tell us more about the competition to design a badge for the Learning Disability Ambassadors at the hospital?

I heard about the competition from my staff. My support worker asked me to do some drawings based on sketches I'd done before, like rainbows, hearts, and hands. Things to do with caring and being happy.

My support workers then put my drawings onto a badge for me and submitted it to the competition. I like drawing and winning prizes. I think the badge was for a good thing.

What did people say about your amazing badge design?

Everyone said 'well done' and gave me a thumbs up. Mum, dad, and staff came to the presentation at Doncaster Royal Infirmary and were very proud.

I spent my prize money on more art materials like pens, pencils, coloured paper, and pads.




READ


WATCH


LISTEN

There She Goes

BBC Two TV series which follows 9-year-old Rosie and her family. Rosie's character is based on the real-life daughter of the series' creator, Shaun Pye and his wife and co-writer, Sarah Crawford, who has a rare and undiagnosed chromosomal disorder.

Harvey and Me

Available to watch on BBC iPlayer, Katie Price and her son, share the journey of him becoming an adult. The documentary shows the struggles of finding Harvey a college to suit his complex needs.

The Peanut Butter Falcon

This film is an adventure story of Zak, a 22-year-old man with Down's syndrome, who runs away to chase his dream, befriending a small-time outlaw on the run who becomes his unlikely mentor. Watch it on Netflix.

Chicken

This (2016) film about two brothers who live in a caravan, one of whom has a unspecified learning disability. Watch it on Amazon Prime.

The Good Hawk

This fiction book set in Scotland follows Agatha, who has Down's syndrome, and how the condition she was born with impacts how she navigates the fantasy world she lives in.

The Future's Rosie

Rosie's Dad, Tom decided to write a blog about life with a child who has Down's syndrome, after finding very little relatable information available. Read it [here](#) or follow @FuturesRosie

In The Key of Genius

Renowned pianist, Derek Paravicini is blind, autistic and has severe learning disabilities. Watch his story on this TEDTalk [here](#).

   FOLLOW

@loaf_and_luce

The adventures of a brother and sister team, Jamie and Lucy. Exploring all things accessible.

@sarah_gordy

MBE, Sarah is an actress, dancer and model. Find out more about her on her TEDTalk [here](#).

@jessicajaneapplegate

Jessica-Jane shares the successes and struggles of her journey as a British Paralympic swimmer.

Keep up-to-date online!

Follow @crtvspprt or visit www.creativesupport.co.uk

We have been sharing #CelebrateDiversity #LearningDisability articles on the news page of our website [here](#), and are hosting social media takeovers with some of our fantastic service users with learning disabilities.

Get Involved!

There is still time to get involved with Learning Disability Month! So if you would like to share your story, favourite film or book, or learning disability hero with us, contact the team on marketing@creativesupport.co.uk and we will do our best to share as much as we can!

Glossary

Learning Disability - refers to a reduced intellectual ability, impacting the way a person is able to learn and communicate.

Learning Difficulty - refers to a specific issue with learning, such as ADHD or Dyslexia and **does not** impact the persons intellect.

PMLD - people with **profound** and **multiple** learning disabilities.

SEN - people who have **special educational needs**.

Self Stigma - commonly found in people with learning disabilities, this happens when people internalise stigma and discrimination from society.

Mild, Moderate, Severe and Profound - ways to determine how strongly affected someone is by their learning disability.

IQ - short for intelligence quotient, an IQ score reflects a persons intellectual ability. It's not a test of knowledge, which represents what you learn through education.



opportunity choice and wellbeing