

Condition Insight Report (CIR)

Learning Disabilities

04/10/2022

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Overview

What is the condition usually called/ any abbreviations used?

Brief overview of the condition

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.

People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complicated information and interact with other people.

The level of support someone needs depends on the individual.

For example, someone with a mild learning disability may only need support with things like getting a job. However, someone with a severe or profound learning disability may need full-time care and support with every aspect of their life – they may also have physical disabilities.

People with certain specific conditions can have a learning disability too. For example, people with Down's syndrome and some people with autism have a learning disability.

Presenting Symptoms

There are different types of learning disability, which can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. In all cases a learning disability is lifelong.

It can be difficult to diagnose a mild learning disability as the individual will often mix well with others and will be able to cope with most everyday tasks. However, they may need support in other areas of their life such as filling out forms.

People with a severe learning disability or profound and multiple learning disability (PMLD), will need more care and support with areas such as mobility, personal care and communication. People with a moderate learning disability may also need support in these areas.

Common symptoms may include:

- Problems reading and/or writing
- Problems with maths
- Poor memory
- Problems paying attention
- Trouble following directions
- Clumsiness
- Trouble telling time
- Problems staying organized

A person with a learning disability may also have one or more of the following :

- Acting without really thinking about possible outcomes (impulsiveness)
- “Acting out” in social situations
- Difficulty staying focused; being easily distracted
- Difficulty saying a word correctly out loud or expressing thoughts
- Having difficulties listening
- Problems dealing with changes in schedule or situations
- Problems understanding words or concepts

Reliability

What specific areas should be covered to ensure a complete, reflective report?

SAFETY 

Do they have any symptoms which could cause a safety consideration?

People with Learning Disabilities will have reduced cognition and intellectual ability and consequently may lack safety awareness. It is imperative to probe, if they are completing activities, if they are doing them safely. Have they had any accidents? Do they require supervision?

TIMELY 

For any activities where restriction is reported how long does it take them to complete these activities? Has how long it takes them changed over time?

Often when living with a Learning Disability, someone will have delayed development and thought processes. Consequently, you must explore how long it is taking the claimant to complete an activity. Would they need assistance to complete an activity such as dressing or washing in a timely manner due to developmental delay?

ACCCEPTABLE 
STANDARD

How have they adapted to completing tasks over time – is this different to what might be considered 'normal'?

If someone suffers from a life-long condition, they can often feel they have adapted to managing certain activities. As a result, you must explore if they are completing activities to an acceptable standard. For example, they may be able to physically dress, but are they dressing appropriately for the weather or occasion?

REPEATEDLY 

Are they able to repeat a task as often as required? Is this the same every day?

Someone may struggle with completing tasks throughout the day due to their Learning Disability and the impact of cognitive fatigue secondary to trying to do something independently.

What types of questions should I ask?

Each claimant is individual and such no assessment will be the same, however, when considering the nature of a Learning Disability, it is important to focus on specifics across information gathering. Examples of this may include;

- Education-Do they attend mainstream or special needs school? Do they have 1:1 support? Do they have a statement? Are they sitting any exams? Are they doing life skills? What are they learning at school? What do they need support with specifically?
- Hobbies-What do they do in their spare time? Do they play games? If so, to what level? Do they need supervision to set this up or complete it? Do they have a social network? If so, what do they do with friends and what level of support does this entail? If they are reading, to what level? Can they understand what they are reading?



Customer Care & Sensitivities



How is it best to ask about any sensitive topics and what are the common courtesies?

In general

- Use accessible language
- Avoid jargon or long words that might be hard to understand.
- Be prepared to use different communication tools and adapt style where appropriate.
- Go at the pace of the person you're communicating with and check you have been understood.
- Remember to involve the companion as they may be able to provide brilliant insight into how the claimant functions day to day.
- Ask open questions; questions that don't have a simple yes or no answer.
- Check with the person that you understand what they are saying e.g. "the TV isn't working? Is that right?"



Functional Impact

A brief summary of the functional impact those living with this condition may experience

Activity 1: Preparing food

People who are diagnosed with Learning Disabilities may struggle with understanding how to safely cook a meal. They may have developmental delay which means they cannot recognise food is cooked or lack awareness of risk.

Remember in PIP...

The claimant needs to be able to complete this activity safely. Can they tell food is cooked? Are they safe with knives or around flames? Are they easily distracted? Do they require prompting?

Activity 2: Taking nutrition

If someone has a cognitive or intellectual impairment, they may overfill their mouths and require supervision or prompting to avoid choking. There is also a high prevalence of swallowing difficulties amongst people with Learning Disabilities.

Remember in PIP...

It should be adequately probed if a claimant can safely eat. Do they need supervision? Are they eating things that would not be considered food/edible? Do they require prompting throughout the duration of the meal? Is there history of choking?

Activity 3: Managing therapy and monitoring a health condition

Someone with a Learning Disability may be having ongoing therapy such as speech and language therapy or physiotherapy. It must be explored if they need assistance with this within the home environment. They may also have other conditions that require the use of regular medications.

Remember in PIP...

If they do take medication, do they remember to take it? Do they prioritise their health? Do they need prompting? Do they complete any therapy in the home environment which may require assistance? If so, how long for?

Functional Impact

A brief summary of the functional impact those living with this condition may experience

Activity 4: Washing and Bathing

People with Learning Disabilities may struggle to maintain personal hygiene or recognise the requirement to wash regularly. They may also prioritise preferred activities and become focused on these, rather than activities such as washing or changing clothes.

Remember in PIP...

Do they understand the requirement to wash and keep clean? Do they need prompting to wash to an acceptable standard? Would prompting suffice or is the cognitive impairment to the extent they require assistance?

Activity 5: Managing toileting needs and incontinence

Incontinence is a major problem for people with learning disabilities: 25 to 50% of those with profound learning disability reach adulthood incontinent of faeces and/or urine.

Remember in PIP...

Do they need prompting to clean themselves after using the toilet? If they have incontinence, can they manage this themselves?

Activity 6: Dressing and undressing

People with Learning Disabilities may struggle to recognise the need to change their clothes regularly or find it difficult to select appropriate clothing

Remember in PIP...

Do they understand the requirement to change their clothing regularly? Do they need prompting to dress to an acceptable standard or appropriate to the weather/environment? Would prompting suffice or is the cognitive impairment to the extent they require assistance?

Functional Impact

A brief summary of the functional impact those living with this condition may experience

Activity 7: Communicating Verbally

Lots of people with Learning Disabilities have hearing loss. This can make communication even more difficult. People with learning disabilities often have extensive difficulties communicating their needs and wishes. This may include not being able to speak or only having a few words, signs or gestures.

Remember in PIP...

*The claimant must be able to both express **and** understand verbal information. Do they use Makaton? Are they non-verbal? How do they communicate in education?*

Activity 8: Reading and understanding signs and symbols

People with learning disabilities often have difficulties with word recognition, fluency, or below average cognitive ability. Their difficulty is with reading and comprehension. Up to 80% of people with learning disabilities have difficulties learning to read.

Remember in PIP...

Complex written information is considered more than one sentence. If they report the ability to read, can they understand what they have read? What support do they have at school?

Activity 9: Engaging with others face to face

Lots of people with Learning Disabilities will lack awareness of social boundaries and may lack social and emotional skills. This may lead to vulnerability and difficulties coping and engaging with unfamiliar people. They may also be over familiar with others, putting them at risk of harm.

Remember in PIP...

We must consider someone's ability to safely engage. Although someone may like to engage with others, are they vulnerable? Do they go out alone? Who can support? Remember in cases where vulnerability is evidenced, prompting would not be appropriate and social support, as a minimum, would apply.

Functional Impact

A brief summary of the functional impact those living with this condition may experience

Activity 10: Budgeting

Some people may need significant levels of support if they have severe or profound learning disabilities, including having someone appointed who is responsible for handling their financial affairs. They may have difficulties understanding the information that is available because it is too complex. And, without the right support, some people with learning disabilities may make poor spending choices because they are unclear of the implications of them.

Remember in PIP...

The context of complex and simple budgeting. Can they understand change in a shop? Could they manage household finances? Could they plan for a future purchase? Do they have someone appointed to manage their finances?

Activity 11: Planning and following a journey

Some people with a Learning Disability will have difficulties future planning, and also with change or managing anything out of their routine.

Remember in PIP...

We must explore both familiar and unfamiliar journeys. How do/did they get to and from education? How do they travel now? Can they go out alone? If not, why not? Are they safe? Could they manage a diversion? How would they plan a new route? Do they have road safety awareness?

Activity 12: Moving Around

Consider if there are any co-existing conditions that may impact on mobility.

Remember in PIP...

If there are any conditions that impact mobility, you must ensure you explore all elements of STAR.

Additional reading or other resources

References

[What is a learning disability? | Mencap.](#)

Living With Severe Learning Disabilities: Jack's Story - YouTube

Internal

Desktop Aid-Learning Disability or Difficulty

Version Control