

# Health

## Vision Statement



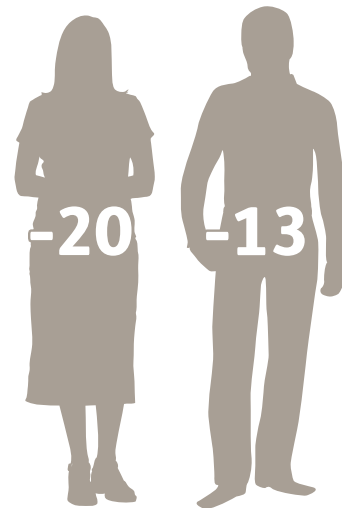
People with a learning disability have a right to good health<sup>1</sup>. Mencap's vision is a future where this right becomes a reality. We want to see health inequalities faced by people with a learning disability eliminated, and for individuals to have access to the same quality of physical and mental healthcare as everybody else. This future would see an end to avoidable deaths of people with a learning disability, and the creation of a health system that fully meets their needs.

### Current situation

People with a learning disability face many health inequalities, often resulting in worse health than the general population. They die 16 years earlier than the general population on average, with approximately 1,200 people with a learning disability dying avoidably every year<sup>2</sup>.



**1,200 people** with a learning disability are dying prematurely in the NHS every year.<sup>1</sup>



Women with a learning disability die on average **20 years earlier** and men **13 years earlier** than the general population.<sup>2</sup>

Studies have found a number of factors responsible for the health inequalities faced by people with a learning disability, all of which have solutions<sup>3</sup>. These include an increased risk of experiencing social factors that can negatively affect health, such as poverty. The quality of healthcare provided to people with a learning disability is also an issue and often does not meet their needs. Health professionals usually have little or no training in learning disability, and reasonable adjustments are not always made.

There are other factors, including a limited understanding by people with a learning disability of how to keep in good health. This can result in lifestyle-related issues, such as being more likely to be over or under weight than the general population. People with a learning disability experience an increased risk of certain health conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, heart problems and mental health problems. However, with early identification and the right treatment, incidences and the impact of these conditions can be reduced.

## What we want

**Mencap want to see health inequalities faced by people with a learning disability eliminated. We believe that the following needs to happen to make this a reality:**

- Healthcare professionals must be trained to ensure they can accurately identify a person with a learning disability. They should also be trained to understand the particular issues that affect them and know how to communicate effectively with people with a learning disability

- Healthcare professionals should involve the individual and their families, and provide the best possible healthcare, tailored to their needs
- There must be tailored support for people with a learning disability, in both primary and secondary healthcare settings. This will ensure their needs are fully understood, they are valued, and their rights are protected
- People with a learning disability must be supported to make healthy life choices, and staff must be trained in providing this support
- Social factors that negatively impact on the health of people with a learning disability, such as poverty, must be addressed and reduced<sup>4</sup>

Last reviewed: July 2016

Next review: July 2019

1. UNCRPD, Article 25; UDHR, Article 25; UNCRC, Articles 23 and 24.
2. <https://www.mencap.org.uk/news/article/1200-avoidable-deaths>
3. <https://www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/projects/particularhealthproblems>
4. For more detail as to how Mencap thinks some of the social factors could be improved upon, please visit our website