



**HERE I AM.**

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Ipsos MORI figures:

# THE FACTS

27%

of people think that a learning disability is a form of mental illness.



27%

of people think that learning disability does not last your whole life.

Just 10%

of the public say they have seen someone with a learning disability featured in newspapers or magazines in the past six months and only 14% being talked about in TV news reports.



Only 30%



people say they would feel comfortable sat next to someone with a mild learning disability in the cinema, or during a show or concert and only 21% would feel comfortable sat next to someone with a severe learning disability.

Only

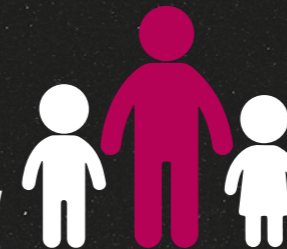
68%

are comfortable with someone with a mild learning disability being one of their representatives on their local council.



Only 67%

agree that people with a mild learning disability can be as good parents as anyone else, and of these only 31% strongly agree they can.



6%

of people would feel uncomfortable using the same swimming pool as someone with a severe learning disability.



# WHAT WE KNOW

Every year

**1,200**

people with a learning disability die avoidably in hospitals<sup>1</sup>.

Almost

**1 in 3**

18-35 year olds with a learning disability spend less than 1 hour a day outside their homes<sup>2</sup>.

Just **6%** of people with a learning disability known to social services are in paid employment<sup>3</sup>.

Children with special educational needs (SEN) are **twice as likely** as other children to be bullied regularly<sup>4</sup>.

**56%** of disabled people say that they have experienced hostility, aggression or violence from a stranger because of their condition<sup>5</sup>.



## THE CHANGE I WANT TO SEE

### Vijay Patel

To begin with, I was nervous about being involved in a campaign like this. I can get nervous when I leave the house and go out in public, especially on transport, people stare and you never know what they're thinking. But I also know I want to change things for me and other people with a learning disability.

I have a part-time job but want to work full-time. I know I can, but sometimes I think employers in interviews feel nervous around people with a learning disability and don't know how to talk to us. It's not because they have bad attitudes, but they don't understand learning disability. I really think **Here I Am** can change this.

I hope the campaign can get the public to see what is possible for people with a learning disability. When given the chance we can achieve so much, and hopefully **Here I Am** is that chance. I hope people with a learning disability are understood better than ever after this, and am proud to fight for this change.



## - THE BATTLE FOR INCLUSION



**Jan Tregelles, chief executive of Mencap**

**Here I Am** is different to anything we have done before. For too long, people with a learning disability have been viewed with confusion, as objects of pity, or worse – with outright hostility. We want to transform how the public think about learning disability, and we want people with a learning disability to be in charge of this.

People don't understand learning disability until they come into contact with it. But for many people that contact, be it face-to-face or in the media, simply never happens. With **Here I Am**, we want to change that, for people with a learning disability to no longer be invisible and misunderstood, and instead be seen, heard and listened to. We want to take away that option to ignore.

We know that people with a learning disability are the best advocates for themselves, and that the most effective way to change attitudes and increase understanding is to speak to someone with a learning disability. Mencap's **Here I Am** campaign will give people with a learning disability a platform to be seen and heard in places they are usually excluded from, to help break down this lack of understanding.

When we talk to people with a learning disability and their families across England, Wales and Northern Ireland they tell us that other people's attitudes are important in every part of their lives. But when I meet people who don't know someone with a learning disability, they ask me: why should I care about people with a learning disability? It is attitudes like this that lead to the exclusion and isolation people with a learning disability can suffer from.

To help us understand what the public really think about learning disability, Mencap commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake the first in-depth representative survey of UK public attitudes towards people with a learning disability for 30 years<sup>6</sup>. Initial results from the survey have shown that the majority of the public support people with a learning disability, but also that there is a huge amount of confusion and misunderstanding about learning disability, and that a smaller but very significant minority have been allowed to hold onto some very negative attitudes – the kind of discrimination that should have no place in 2016 Britain.

We have been able to ignore learning disability all too easily. **Here I Am** takes this option away, and by giving people with a learning disability the chance to speak out we are confident that we will start to break down this lack of understanding, and directly challenge those negative, lazy assumptions so that they lose their power to negatively affect people's lives.

Learning disability had been invisible for too long, but now it's time to see it. Visit [mencap.org.uk/hereiam](http://mencap.org.uk/hereiam) and find out what learning disability really means and help us shape how society views learning disability.

**“LEARNING DISABILITY  
HAS BEEN INVISIBLE FOR  
TOO LONG, BUT NOW IT'S  
TIME TO SEE IT.”**

## WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY?

As part of our work to change attitudes, we commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake the first in-depth representative survey of UK public attitudes towards people with a learning disability for 30 years.

Here we release some of the initial results from that survey, with a full release coming at a later date, which makes it clear how important raising awareness and increasing understanding of learning disability is.

### **Most of the UK public support people with a learning disability.**

- Only 5% of people agree that increased spending on care and support services for people with a learning disability is a waste of money.
- 93% of the public agree that people with learning disabilities can be productive members of society.

### **But there are also a lot of misunderstandings about learning disability.**

- 27% of people think that a learning disability is a form of mental illness.
- 27% of people think that learning disability does not last your whole life.

## WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

Learning disability isn't a mental illness, and it isn't something that changes over time.

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.

It's important to remember that with the right support, most people with a learning disability in the UK can lead independent lives.





## SOME PEOPLE STILL HAVE HIGHLY NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Thankfully, most people are supportive of people with a learning disability, but there are some who still express really negative attitudes.

**In our survey, 6% of people would feel uncomfortable using the same swimming pool as someone with a severe learning disability.**

These negative attitudes, even if they are only from a minority of people, can have very significant impact on people's lives.

In focus groups for planning this campaign a member of the public said:

**“We are still the people that were on the planet from the beginning, and when someone is out of the herd, they're out of the herd. Look at the animals, the mother sits on the runt.”**

“

**Richard and Esther, who are in a relationship together:**

A few years ago it got very bad. We were walking in the street together and some school kids started to follow us, throwing stones and calling us names. A few days later Esther was sitting at a bus stop, and the same kids threw boiling water on her. We felt damaged and scared, but we know the future can be better and it's why we're involved with Mencap and Here I Am.

”

**CONTACT CAN HELP CHANGE ATTITUDES, BUT PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY ARE RARELY SEEN IN POPULAR CULTURE**

Despite the misunderstanding and confusion around learning disability, we know that the best way to change attitudes is contact. It might not always be possible to meet someone with a learning disability face-to-face, so the media can play an important role. However, people with a learning disability are often shut out from mainstream media.

**Just 10% of the public say they have seen someone with a learning disability featured in newspapers or magazines in the past six months and only 14% being talked about in TV news reports.**

**Ciara Lawrence, who has a learning disability and has been campaigning for the media to increase representation of people with a learning disability:**

“ I have a learning disability and growing up I never saw anyone like me on TV, in magazines or on the radio. There’s a lot of confusion and fear that the public have when it comes to learning disability, and the media can change this. I want Here I Am to help us get more people with a learning disability on TV and in the news. There’s 1.4 million of us, we’re a huge audience and shouldn’t be overlooked. ”





## THE PUBLIC ARE UNEASY AROUND CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY

Most people said they would feel comfortable about someone with a learning disability moving in next door to them, but only 30% said they would feel comfortable sat next to someone with a learning disability in the cinema, or during a show or concert<sup>7</sup>.



**Vijay Patel:**

For someone with a learning disability like me, public attitudes are really important. Knowing that when you leave home you may be stared at and avoided can be the difference between leaving the house or not.



## ALTHOUGH PEOPLE ARE GENERALLY POSITIVE, THERE IS A LOT OF UNCERTAINTY ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY CAN ACHIEVE

In our survey, only 61% of people 'strongly disagree' that people who have a learning disability are a burden on society, 22% 'tend to disagree' with this statement, 6% 'disagree' and 9% 'neither disagree or agree'.

How would you feel if almost 40% of people were not sure if you were a burden on society or not?

Public have concerns about people with a **mild** learning disability making good parents, despite research showing that with right support people with a learning disability can be as good parents as anyone else<sup>8</sup>.

■ Only 67% of people agree that people with a mild learning disability can be as good parents as anyone else.

“ **Ismail has a learning disability and is a father to three children:**

I have a wife and three children. I'm one of just 7% of people with a learning disability to experience the pride and joy of being a parent. People with a learning disability need extra support in their lives, but it doesn't mean we shouldn't have the chance to show that with the right support we can be excellent parents. I know parenting isn't right for everyone. But I want to challenge the attitude some people have that having a learning disability means you can't be a good dad.





## WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICS, THE PUBLIC ARE CONCERNED ABOUT SOMEONE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY MAKING DECISIONS

We know that people with a learning disability can achieve great things when given the opportunity. However, **only 68%** of the public would feel comfortable with **someone with a mild learning disability being one of their representatives on their local council**. But we know there are great people with a learning disability acting as public servants.



“ **Sara Pickard was elected as a community councillor:**

When I first joined the council I asked if we could change the way the meeting notes were printed because they weren't accessible and were difficult to understand. The response was very negative; I was told 'you can't change the way other councillors speak'.

So I asked them what they would do if a blind person was elected to the council – if they would produce the papers in braille. That shocked them and they did eventually make the papers more accessible. But it is sad that I had to ask and challenge them before they would make any adjustments.



# REFERENCES AND METHODOLOGY

<sup>1</sup> Glover, G., & Emerson, E. (2013). Estimating how many deaths of people with learning disabilities in England could be prevented by better medical care. Tizard Learning Disability Review, 18(3), 146–149. <http://doi.org/10.1108/TLDR-03-2013-0025>

<sup>2</sup> Mencap survey of 18-35 year olds with a learning disability <https://www.mencap.org.uk/press-release/learning-disability-week-highlights-isolation-faced-young-people-learning-disability>

<sup>3</sup> NHS Digital (2015) Community care statistics, social services activity, England - 2014-15. Available at: <http://digital.nhs.uk/article/2021/Website-Search?productid=18981&q=Community+Care+Statistics%2c+Social+Services+Activity&sort=Relevance&size=10&page=1&area=both#top> (Accessed: 15 September 2016).

<sup>4</sup> IoE London (2014) *Research Summary: Are Disabled Children and Young People at Higher Risk of being bullied?* Available online: <http://www.closer.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Briefing-4-Disability-and-bullying-June-20141.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> From a poll of disabled people conducted for scope by COMRes in 2011 <http://www.scope.org.uk/About-Us/Media/Press-releases/May-2011/Deteriorating-attitudes-towards-disabled-people> <http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/scope-discrimination-survey-3/>

<sup>6</sup> An online survey was conducted using Ipsos’ online panel (IIS) with a UK sample of 2,002 online panellists aged 16 and over. Ipsos MORI and Mencap worked together to develop the survey questionnaire. Fieldwork took place between 28th April and 10th May 2016. Quotas were set by age and gender within each country, and region within England. To allow for analysis by country, the number of responses from Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland were each boosted to 200. The data were weighted to ensure a nationally representative sample of people aged 16 and over in the UK. When interpreting the survey findings, it is important to remember that the results are based on a sample of the population, not the entire population, and are therefore subject to confidence intervals.

<sup>7</sup> As part of the survey, respondents were shown two videos, one featuring people with milder forms of learning disability, and one featuring people with a more severe forms of learning disability. Respondents were then asked questions in reference to those videos. 92% of respondents said they would feel either fairly, or very comfortable if someone with a milder learning disability moved in next door to them. Respondents were asked to indicate how they would feel if sat next to someone like the people in the videos at the cinema, or during a show or concert. 30% of respondents said they would feel comfortable sat next to someone with a milder form of learning disability. 21% said they would feel comfortable sat next to someone with a more severe form of learning disability.

<sup>8</sup> C.f. Conder, J., Mirfin-Veitch, B., Sanders, J., & Munford, R. (2011). Planned pregnancy, planned parenting: enabling choice for adults with a learning disability. British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 39(2), 105–112. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3156.2010.00625.x> and Emerson, E., & Brigham, P. (2014). The developmental health of children of parents with intellectual disabilities: Cross sectional study. Research in Developmental Disabilities, 35(4), 917–21. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2014.01.006>

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