

Social security

Vision Statement

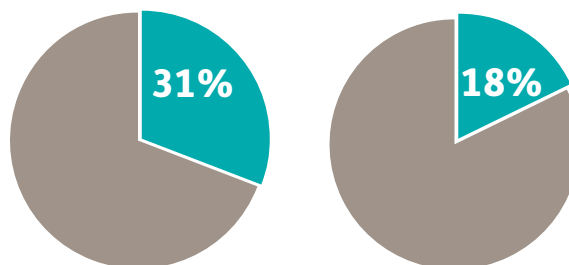


Mencap's vision is a future where all people with a learning disability and their families have a good standard of living and, where they need it, receive financial support in the form of social security¹. Social security should enable people with a learning disability and their families to have a home, pay bills, buy food and have some disposable income to spend as they wish. Social security must help individuals to find and stay in work if they can, and provide security if they cannot. It must also support people with a learning disability to meet the extra costs they are likely to face.

Current situation

Disabled people, including people with a learning disability and their families, are more likely to live in poverty than the general population. Currently, 31% of households including a disabled person live in poverty, compared to 18% of households where no one is disabled². This is partly a result of the extra costs faced by disabled people - £550 per month on average³. People with a learning disability and their families also face barriers to accessing social security available to them in and out of work, and the levels often do not meet the extra costs they face.

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Applications for social security can be challenging for people with a learning disability and their families, resulting in many needing support to apply. In addition, waiting times for assessments and decisions often take months. Assessments are often of poor quality, resulting in the majority of appeal decisions found in favour of the claimant⁴. People with a learning disability are also forced to undergo regular re-assessments, to keep the out-of-work and disability related entitlements that they already receive. Furthermore, people with a learning disability often face unreasonable expectations and inadequate support in relation to moving towards and finding employment. This often results in sanctions which remove some social security payments, causing further financial hardship.

What we want

Mencap want social security to play its part in supporting people with a learning disability and their families to have a good standard of living. In order for this to happen:

- The government and society should recognise social security as a necessary right and a form of income replacement to help alleviate poverty
- The extra costs that people with a learning disability face must be recognised and met in full by the social security system
- The social security system must provide people with stability and long-term security, and not force them to undergo continual reassessments
- People assessing and making decisions on social security claims must have better and more in-depth training and understanding in learning disability. This means decisions are right the first time, and people with a learning disability and their families get timely access to financial assistance
- High quality support – financial and otherwise – must be available to help people with a learning disability move towards, find, and stay in work, with long-term security for those who cannot work

1. People with a learning disability have a right to an adequate standard of living. This includes the right to access social security when they need it. However Mencap believes this right should be to a good standard of living.
2. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/mpse-2015/disability-and-poverty>; these figures adjust for disability benefits.
3. Brawn, E: Priced Out, Scope, April 2014.
4. Put the link here about ESA / PIP appeals

Last reviewed: July 2016
Next review: currently being reviewed