



Support from your GP if you have a Learning Disability



What is a Learning Disability?



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.



People may have a mild, moderate, severe or profound learning disability. Their disability can affect them in different ways.



People with a learning disability are more likely to have long term health conditions, like epilepsy or diabetes.



It is important to make sure that your GP surgery knows you have a learning disability. This is so you can get extra support and be put on the Learning Disability Register.



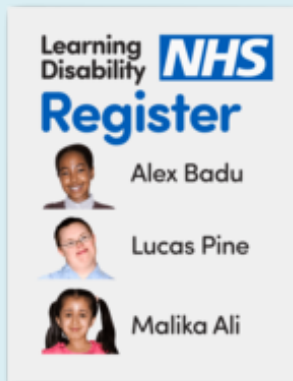
A **learning difficulty** is different from a learning disability. People with a learning difficulty need support with reading, writing or doing maths. They may have dyslexia or dyscalculia.



You may not be put on the Learning Disability Register if you have a learning difficulty.



The Learning Disability Register



The learning disability register is a list of people who have a learning disability.



Doctors use it to make sure that people with a learning disability get the right support in the right ways.



You can ask to be added to the learning disability register by contacting your GP surgery



Not all receptionists will know about the register and may not be able to check it.



You may need to make an appointment with your GP to talk about the learning disability register.



The GP will probably ask you some questions about your learning disability, and how it affects you.



You may use different words to describe your learning disability, such as a learning difficulty or learning difference. However, it may be more helpful to say you have a **learning disability** to the GP or GP receptionist at first.



You could tell them about what kind of support you need in your day-to-day life.



You could tell them about anything that makes it harder for you to look after your health.



You could tell them about any **disability benefits** you get.



You could tell them if you have a **social worker**



You could also tell them about any support you had or have at **school**.



You **do not** have to get support from social services to be on the learning disability register.



You **do not** have to take any tests to join the learning disability register.



You **do not** have to get any disability benefit payments to join the learning disability register



What Support can people with a Learning Disability get from their GP?



By law, the GP surgery must make helpful changes to the way they do things to make it easier for people with a learning disability.



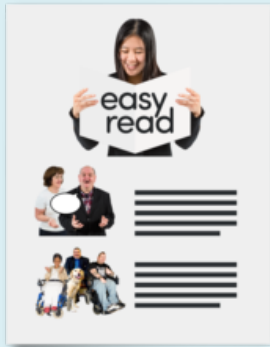
You can ask the GP surgery to make some changes to how they do things to make it easier for you.



This is called making '**Reasonable Adjustments**'. Reasonable adjustments can include:



Giving you more time in your appointments



Giving you information about your health in easy read, large print, Braille, or your preferred language



Making sure you do not have to wait a long time for your appointments, or waiting somewhere other than the waiting room



If going to the GP surgery is not possible because of your disability, the GP may be able to see you at home.



If it is harder for you to do appointments on the phone or online you can ask to see a GP face to face.

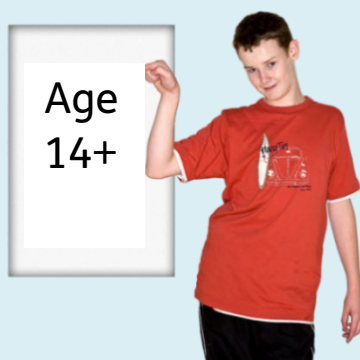


The GP surgery can make a note on your health records about the support or changes that work best for you.



If you are on the Learning Disability Register your GP should offer you a Annual Health Check once a year.

Annual Health Checks



Anyone with a learning disability aged 14 and over can have an annual health check



This should be a longer appointment for you to talk about your health and do some health checks. It normally lasts an hour.



It should be with your GP but you may see a nurse.



You can bring someone with you to the appointment, like your support worker, carer or family member.

During the check, the GP or nurse may:



Talk about your health and how you are feeling. For example, they might ask about what food you eat, or how you are in general.



Check your body, for example check your weight, heart, and blood pressure



Talk about any medicines you take. They may ask you to have a blood test or give a wee sample.



At the end of the health check, you should be given a health action plan. This is a plan for how you will keep healthy over the coming year and any actions you will need to take.



You and your doctor can look at the health action plan all through the year and check how you are doing.



Your health action plan should be easy for you to understand.

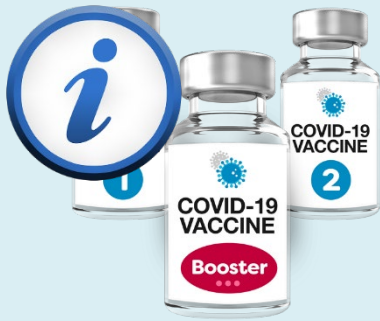
Vaccinations



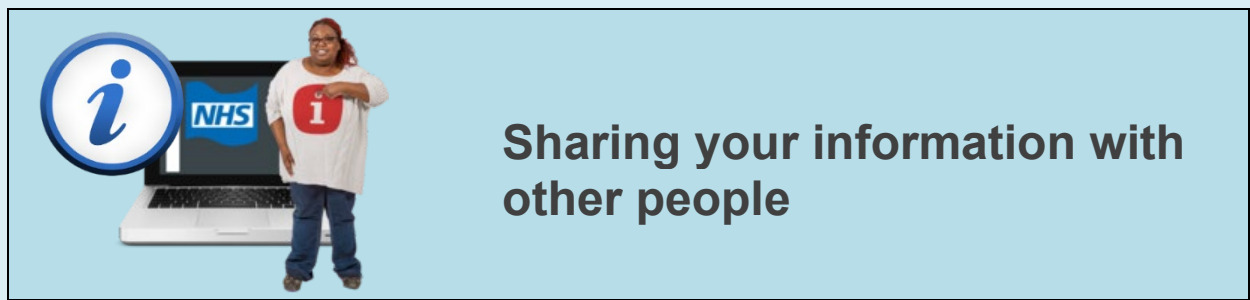
People on the learning disability register can get a free flu vaccine and are able to get the coronavirus vaccine and booster before many other people.



You do not have to have a vaccine just because you are on the learning disability register, but it does mean you get the choice.



For more info about vaccines, see our webpage [here](#).



Sharing your information with other people



Other people in the GP surgery can be made aware of your reasonable adjustments and make sure you get the support you need.



You can ask the GP to make sure that this is shared with other health care workers you may see, for example at the hospital or healthcare centre.



This can help make sure all the healthcare workers you see know what support and reasonable adjustments you need.



Getting a Translator



If you do not speak English well, your GP should organise a translator for you.



People with a learning disability can ask for a translator.



Carers who are supporting someone with a learning disability can also ask for a translator.



Ask your GP to make a note in your records that you need a translator when you have an appointment.



If you need more help:



Speak to someone at your GP surgery



Speak to an organisation in your community that you trust



If you are still in school, Speak to your teacher



Speak to your community learning disability team [here](#) or a learning disability nurse if you have one.



You can call the Mencap Learning Disability Helpline on 0808 808 111



Or [click here](#) to send us an email.



If your GP is unsure about adding you to the learning disability register and needs more information, [there is a guide for them from NHS England here.](#)



Advocacy organisations that can help:

Organisations in Sussex



Amaze

<https://amazesussex.org.uk/>
01273 772289



Brighton and Hove Speak Out

<https://www.bhspeakout.org.uk/>
01273 421921



Impact Initiatives

<https://impact-initiatives.org.uk/>
01273 322940

National Organisations



POhWER

<https://www.pohwer.net/>
0300 456 2370



Self Advocacy Groups

<https://selfadvocacygroups.co.uk/>



Youssef's Story



"My GP phones me to remind me about my health check, because sometimes I forget."



I didn't realise I was low on vitamin B12 until I had my Annual Health Check.



Now I take vitamins to correct that.



If I didn't have the check I may have been ill and not realised it."