

REFERENCE NUMBER OF DOCUMENT:	11.2.375.01
COMMITTEE IDENTIFICATION:	Galago Directors
SECRETARIAT:	MS
DOCUMENT TYPE:	External Policy
DOCUMENT LANGUAGE:	E
THIS POLICY IS FOR:	Staff including Agency Workers (temporary workers), Commissioners and Service Users

LEARNING DISABILITY

WARNING:

If the document contains proprietary information, it may only be released to third parties after management has approved its release.

Unless otherwise marked, documents are uncontrolled; uncontrolled documents are not subject to update notifications.

The latest revision of this document can be found in the reference panel above. It can also be determined and double checked by checking the 'Master Document List' before using or sending.

Any changes must be requested through the 'Document Control Manager' by submitting a 'Document Change Request' form.

LEARNING DISABILITY POLICY & PROCEDURE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy ensures that staff including Agency Workers at Nursing Direct use appropriate terminology, understand the differing support needs, and comply with national standards including NICE, the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) Right Support, Right Care, Right Culture guidance for providers supporting people with learning disabilities and autism, and NHS England frameworks.
- 1.2 This policy provides clear guidance for all staff including Agency Workers at Nursing Direct on the distinction between learning disabilities and learning difficulties.
- 1.3 To provide individualised, safe and supportive care for people with learning disabilities.
- 1.4 To meet the Key Lines of Enquiry and Quality Statements as set out by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- 1.5 Relevant Legislation The Care Act 2014
 - Equality Act 2010
 - The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
 - Mental Capacity Act 2005
 - Mental Health Act 1983
 - Health and Care Act 2022
 - The Accessible Information Standard (DCB1605 Accessible Information)

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 Roles Affected:
 - All Staff including Agency Workers
 - Registered Manager
- 2.2 People Affected:
 - Service Users
- 2.3 Stakeholders Affected:
 - Family/ Next of kin
 - Advocates Representatives
 - External health professionals

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To provide a framework of supportive care for service users with learning disabilities that promotes choice and control over their own lives.
- 3.2 To ensure that staff, including Agency Workers working with service users with learning disabilities, have an understanding of learning disabilities in order to provide effective, individualised support.

4. POLICY

4.1 What is a Learning Disability?

Definition (UK/NICE/CQC)

A *learning disability* is defined as:

"A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills, and a reduced ability to cope independently, which starts before adulthood and has a lasting effect on development."

Key Characteristics

- Global and long-term impairment of intellectual ability
- Affects reasoning, learning, and adaptive (daily living) skills
- Lifelong condition, not a specific academic difficulty
- Onset occurs before adulthood

Examples of Learning Disabilities

- Mild, moderate, severe, or profound learning disabilities
- Down's Syndrome
- Fragile X Syndrome
- Williams Syndrome
- Prader-Willi Syndrome
- Global developmental delay (when persistent)

Implications for Staff including Agency Workers

Service Users with a learning disability may require reasonable adjustments to communication, care and support, and learning environments.

Support should promote independence and inclusion while recognising cognitive limitations.

All care and support must be person-centred, in line with the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and Equality Act (2010).

4.2 What are Learning Difficulties (Specific Learning Difficulties – SpLD)?

Definition (NHS/SCIE/British Dyslexia Association)

A learning difficulty (or specific learning difficulty (SpLD)) refers to:

“A problem that affects a person's ability to learn in a typical manner, but does not affect overall intelligence.”

Key Characteristics

- Specific rather than global; affects particular areas of learning
- Does not impact general intellectual ability
- May be improved or managed with targeted interventions and support
- Service Users are often of average or above average intelligence

Examples of Learning Difficulties

- **Dyslexia**
Difficulty with reading, spelling, phonological processing
- **Dyscalculia**
Difficulty understanding numbers and mathematical concepts
- **Dysgraphia**
Difficulty with handwriting and written expression
- **Dyspraxia (Developmental Coordination Disorder)**
Affects coordination and motor planning
- **Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)**
Difficulty understanding or using language
- **Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)**
Difficulty interpreting sounds
- **Visual Processing Difficulties**
Difficulty processing visual information
- **Nonverbal Learning Difficulty (NVLD)**
Difficulties with visual-spatial reasoning and social interpretation

Implications for Staff including Agency Workers

- Service Users with learning difficulties require targeted learning strategies and inclusive approaches
- Use assistive technologies and differentiated instruction to meet Service Users' needs
- Support must focus on skill development rather than global care or capacity issues
- Staff including Agency Workers should avoid using the term 'learning disability' for SpLDs such as dyslexia, as this has a distinct clinical meaning in the UK
- Staff including Agency Workers must refer to individual Care Plans which detail any specific support requirements

When supporting Service Users with learning difficulties staff including Agency Workers must refer to the Person-centred Care and Support Planning Policy and Procedure.

4.3 Person-Centred Care

Nursing Direct believes that person-centred care planning is the only way to achieve a quality service for each Service User. Nursing Direct will act holistically to develop and deliver person-centred Service User care planning. To ensure that this is at the heart of Care delivery, Nursing Direct will ensure that the following areas are developed for each Service User:

- Identify and maintain focus on areas where the Service User is able to remain independent
- The goals and aspirations of the Service User The desired outcomes of what is to be achieved
- Information is presented to the Service User in a way that they can understand (Accessible Information Standard)
- Provide the Service User with opportunities to make decisions about their own Care
- Understand that the Care is evolving at all times and adapt with the Service User's changing needs or preferences

All Service Users will have a full assessment prior to the start of the service which formulates a well-rounded view of the Service User, their history and their life now, and then a review within 6 weeks of Care commencing.

Further information on person-centred care and the process to be followed can be found in the Person-Centred Care and Support Planning Policy and Procedure at Nursing Direct.

4.4 Reasonable Adjustments

Staff, including Agency Workers at Nursing Direct, will be aware of the needs of Service Users in their service who have learning disabilities. They will recognise that Service Users with learning disabilities may also have additional physical or mental health conditions and may need extra support to understand information, communicate effectively, and access services.

Staff, including Agency Workers, will also understand that Service Users may also experience challenges with processing information, communication, or organisation.

Appropriate reasonable adjustments and supportive approaches will be provided to ensure that all Service Users can fully engage with, and benefit from, the services offered.

The Service User's Care Plan can consist of various formats:

- Paper
- Digital
- Photographs
- Scanned records
- Letters

All Care Plans will be legible, complete and easy to understand, detailed and practical, easy to follow and reflect fact.

Nursing Direct will comply with the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard. Please refer to the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) Policy and Procedure.

Staff including Agency Workers will refer to individual Care Plans which detail any specific support or reasonable adjustments.

4.5 Co-Production

Staff, including Agency Workers at Nursing Direct, will work in partnership with Service Users, other professionals, informal carers, family members and legal representatives as appropriate. In conjunction with healthcare professionals, staff including Agency Workers will review the physical and mental health wellbeing of Service Users.

4.6 Mental Capacity

Nursing Direct understands that an essential part of the Care Plan process is to obtain consent from the Service User to their Care and will support them to make informed decisions at all times. Nursing Direct will support Service Users to be involved as much as possible where they do not have capacity to give consent.

Nursing Direct recognises that capacity can change and will keep decisions under review.

4.7 LeDeR

Nursing Direct is committed to following the LeDeR (Learning from the Lives and Deaths of People with a Learning Disability and Autistic People) reporting recommendations. It will report all relevant deaths in line with national guidance and engage openly with LeDeR reviews.

Nursing Direct aims to learn from every review to improve care and support quality, reduce inequalities, and promote safe, person-centred support for people with a learning disability.

4.8 Training and Development

The Government has introduced a requirement for CQC registered service providers to ensure their staff, including Agency Workers, receive learning disability and autism training appropriate to their role.

This is to ensure the health and social care workforce has the right skills and knowledge to provide safe, compassionate and informed Care to autistic people and people with a learning disability.

This requirement is set out in the Health and Care Act 2022.

Staff, including Agency Workers, receive training in accordance with national guidance and in addition, for any identified needs of the Service Users, Nursing Direct will ensure supplementary training is provided to staff, including Agency Workers, to support those needs.

Further information can be found in the Training Policy and Procedure Nursing Direct.

5. PROCEDURE

5.1 Main Signs of a Learning Disability

Learning disabilities can vary depending on the type and severity. Generally, they involve difficulties with understanding, communication, daily living skills, and social interaction.

Learning disabilities are lifelong conditions that affect the way a person learns new information or skills, rather than being caused by a temporary illness or injury.

These may include:

- Cognitive difficulties
- Communication challenges
- Daily living and practical skills
- Social interaction differences
- Behavioural signs

Service Users may have additional physical or sensory needs.

5.2 The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has produced guidelines for supporting people with learning disabilities and behaviour that challenges (NG93).

Key points that NG93 sets out include:

1. Person-centred Care

- Services should be designed around the needs, preferences, and strengths of the Service User
- Service Users with learning disabilities should be actively involved in decisions about their care and support

2. Assessment and Planning

- Comprehensive assessment of needs, risks, and strengths is required
- Care Plans should address behaviour that challenges, physical and mental health, social inclusion, and communication needs of Service Users

3. Workforce and Training

- Staff including Agency Workers should be trained in understanding learning disabilities, behaviour that challenges, Service User communication strategies, and positive support approaches
- Teams should have access to specialist advice when required

4. Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)

- Services should aim to reduce the use of restrictive practices (e.g. restraint or seclusion) and promote positive behaviour support strategies

5. Multi-agency Working

- Coordination across health, social care, education, and voluntary sector services is essential
- Clear pathways for referrals, transitions, and Service User crisis support should be established

6. Environment and Service Design

- The physical and social environment should be adapted to minimise triggers for behaviour that challenges
- Attention should be paid to sensory needs, personal space, routine, and social inclusion

7. Review and Monitoring

- Regular review of Care Plans, risk assessments, and service effectiveness
- Continuous improvement and feedback from Service Users and families

5.3 **General Guidelines**

Staff including Agency Workers at Nursing Direct who may be caring for, or supporting someone with, learning disabilities, will ensure that the care and support provided is person-centred, promotes independence and inclusion, and is based on evidence-based best practice.

- Where the Service User is living with a learning disability, staff including Agency Workers must be aware of the process for referral for assessment, which would include referral to the Service User's GP and for an assessment of need under the Care Act 2014
- Where the Service User has received a diagnosis of a learning disability, staff including Agency Workers must be aware of care pathways in their area for people in their care
- Offer information in a format that is easily accessible and understandable for the Service User including the use of easy-read materials, visuals, or other communication aids
- Staff including Agency Workers must consider whether the Service User may benefit from access to an independent advocate when required, staff including Agency Workers will support the Service User to access the appropriate advocacy services in line with the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005. This includes supporting referrals, providing information in accessible formats, and recording involvement or refusal in the care plan. Offer information on self-help, Service User support groups, or one-to-one support, and provide assistance so that the Service User can access these resources where required
- Assess the physical environment where the Service User receives support or care. Consider personal space, decor, lighting, noise, and sensory needs and make appropriate reasonable adjustments where practicable
- Be alert to any physical health issues, lack of physical activity, or changes in eating and drinking, and report these to the Service User's GP if there are concerns
- Maintain awareness of social interaction difficulties and offer support to the Service User in forming or maintaining friendships and relationships, where appropriate

5.4 **Person-Centred Care**

Nursing Direct ensures that staff, including Agency Workers, get to know each Service User well, and therefore have an understanding of changes that may impact them and cause distress. These could include but are not limited to:

- Changes in the time of planned support or visits
- Changes in the rota
- Changes to routine or planned activities

Nursing Direct ensures that it has measures in place to reduce stress and matches understanding and confident staff, including Agency Workers with Service Users.

5.5 **Care Plans**

Only staff including Agency Workers at Nursing Direct who have had training in learning disabilities must undertake initial assessments prior to commencement of service provision.

In order to complete a person-centred care and support plan, assessments of communication, physical, mental and emotional health needs will be carried out. The Care Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Children and adults with learning disabilities may face barriers to education, employment, training, and social inclusion, and supporting access to these opportunities must be part of the Care Plan process, with the following considerations:

Communication Needs

- Assess effective communication, verbal or non-verbal, in situations such as 1:1 interactions, communal settings, and community activities
- Consider cognitive and motor abilities, learning style, literacy levels, and any specific communication needs
- Additional communication considerations may include sensory needs, hearing or sight loss, and speech difficulties
- Use of communication aids such as easy-read materials, signs and symbols, Makaton, British Sign Language (BSL), objects of reference, communication passports, and photos. Communication plans must detail all identified needs of the Service Users

Potential Risks

Behaviours

- Document behaviours that are usually observed, what they may indicate, and guidance on responding. Link to Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) plans and ABC (Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence) charts where relevant
- Note any identified routines, preferences, or repetitive behaviours
- Consider how to rule out other underlying causes
- Redirection strategies including rewards, sensory activities, and structured support

Sensory Needs

- Consider environmental factors such as noise, lighting, crowded or enclosed spaces, and how these affect the Service User

Eating and Drinking

- Include any support required and note additional conditions, for example, swallowing difficulties or Pica

Activities and Participation

- Document likes, dislikes, routines, planning requirements (e.g. transport), risks, and contingency plans

Accessible Information Resources

- Include easy-read documents, communication passports, health action plans, or other formats to support understanding and independence

Social Media and Online Safety

- Staff including Agency Workers will support Service Users to manage their use of social media and online platforms safely and responsibly. This support will be tailored to each person's needs and preferences and will be included in their Care Plans.
- If the Service User does not have capacity to manage their social media accounts, staff including Agency Workers will inform their next of kin for supporting with managing this use
- Where appropriate, any related risks will be identified and addressed through individual risk assessments to promote safe, informed, and positive online engagement

Medication Support

- Every Service User will have in place an individual medication care and support plan outlining any support required to assist with medication management. This care and support plan will also detail any actions required to ensure staff at Nursing Direct follow the principles of STOMP (Stopping over medication of people with a learning disability and autistic people). Medication support and review will be undertaken in partnership with the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) including the Service User's GP, prescribing clinician, and relevant specialist health professionals such as learning disability teams, mental health services, or pharmacists, as appropriate. Further information can be found within the medicines management policies and procedures at Nursing Direct

Staff including Agency Workers can also view further information in the Care Plan and in the suite of policies and procedures at Nursing Direct.

National and local learning disability organisations produce a range of information and resources that staff including Agency Workers at Nursing Direct will find useful when supporting someone with learning disabilities.

Staff including Agency Workers will follow the Person-Centred Care and Support Planning Policy and Procedure of Nursing Direct.

5.6 **Mental Capacity**

Where the Service User is unable to take certain decisions or choices regarding their care and support, those decisions must be taken for that Service User in accordance with the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and best interest process.

Staff including Agency Workers can refer to the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 Policy and Procedure at Nursing Direct.

5.7 Learning and Development

Nursing Direct will ensure that all staff, including Agency Workers, complete the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism.

Staff including Agency Workers may need additional training according to each Service User's specific needs.

6. DEFINITIONS

6.1 All staff including Agency Workers

6.1.1 Staff

Denotes the employees of Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited.

6.1.2 Agency Workers

Refers to individuals who are contracted with Nursdoc Limited or another employment business as an Agency Worker (temporary worker) provided to Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited to perform care services under the direction of Nursing Direct.

6.2 Nursing Direct

Nursing Direct, also known as Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited, is the entity regulated by the CQC (Care Quality Commission) and responsible for the care service provision, contracted to provide homecare services to service users in their homes, in placements, essential healthcare facilities and in the community.

6.3 Nursdoc Limited

As the sister company to Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited, Nursdoc Limited acts as an employment business, specialising in providing staffing solutions to the healthcare sector.

6.4 CQC (Care Quality Commission)

CQC throughout this policy, the term "CQC" refers to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which is the independent regulator of health and social care in England.

6.5 Echolalia

A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills, and a reduced ability to cope independently, which starts before adulthood and has a lasting effect on development


6.6 Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

A learning difficulty (or specific learning difficulty – SpLD) refers to a problem that affects a person's ability to learn in a typical manner, but does not affect overall intelligence

OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

To be "outstanding" in this policy area you could provide evidence that:

- Information is provided in accessible formats to help people understand their care and support
- Nursing Direct implements a number of innovative ways to demonstrate that it works with people to help them achieve their maximum potential
- Staff including Agency Workers at Nursing Direct know how people respond to sights and sounds, textures, touch and smell and this helps staff to communicate and work effectively with people using the service
- Support provided is individualised to the Service User's personal preferences, needs and cultural identities
- People's likes, dislikes and how they like things done are explored and incorporated into their Care Plans
- Nursing Direct considers the use of colour in its setting, including but not limited to, uniforms, rooms and objects
- All staff including Agency Workers complete the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism

COMPLETED DATE:	17.12.2025
SIGN OFF DATE:	17.12.2025
REVIEW DATE:	17.12.2026
SIGNED:	 Marc Stiff – Group Managing Director