

Appendix 3

DEFINITION OF LEARNING DISABILITY

The Government define a learning disability as including the presence of:

“A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intellectual functioning), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impairment of adaptive/ social functioning), and which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development” (Valuing People, DOH, 2001).

The DSM4 states that as well as intellectual functioning being markedly below average (IQ 70 or less), that difficulty functioning in 2 or more of the following areas would be expected:

- Communicating
- Caring for self
- Living at home
- Relating to others
- Directing self
- Using community resources
- Academic functioning
- Working
- Health and safety

It also states that the condition started before the age of 18.
(This can be seen as those within the bottom 3 to 5 % of the population based on IQ and social functioning levels)

The Government emphasizes that the use of IQ scoring alone is not a sufficient reason to decide whether someone should be provided with additional specialist support, but assessment of social functioning and communication are to be taken into account, (Valuing People, DoH 2001).

The definition covers adults with autism who have learning disabilities, but not those with a higher level autistic spectrum disorder who may be of average or above average intelligence – such as some people with Asperger Syndrome, (Valuing People, DoH 2001).

The definition also does not cover those who have acquired brain damage, or whose functional deficits are due to mental illness alone, e.g. those with Dementia