

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Devon Children and Young People Learning Disability Team

Information Guide for  
Professionals

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

## **How to refer**

Please complete a referral form and send it through to the Devon Single Point of Access (SPA) by calling 0300 024 5321 or emailing [TSDFT.DevonSPA@nhs.net](mailto:TSDFT.DevonSPA@nhs.net) or call the pathway coordinators.

## **Who can refer?**

Referrals will be accepted by healthcare staff, schools and education professionals, social care staff, voluntary sector workers, or parents and carers.

## **What to write on your referral**

The referral form will have prompts for the information that is needed. However, please ensure you include the following:

- The issues the family would like support with
- The child's level of learning disability and how this impacts upon them in their daily life
- Other physical, emotional or social needs of the child, young person and/or family
- Any current or previous support the family has received with respect to the child's learning disability
- Any known risks from or towards the family or child

The Learning Disability Team, 1A Capital Court, Bittern Road, Sowton Industrial Estate, Exeter, Devon, EX2 7FW

[www.childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk](http://www.childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk)

### Appropriate referrals

Our services will accept referrals for children and young people attending the following special schools:

Ellen Tinkham  
Mill Water  
Pathfield

Oaklands Park  
Bidwell Brook

Referrals for children and young people attending other specialist schools or attending mainstream provision (or attached units) with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (or education or healthcare plan equivalent) will be considered in terms of the child's level of learning disability, the level of functional impairment, and the nature and severity of the presenting problem.

A referral is appropriate if there are significant concerns about the child's development, health, wellbeing or behaviour and these are having a significant impact on the child's functioning at home.

Welcome to Devon Children and Young People Learning Disability Team. We provide a range of services for children who have severe to profound learning disabilities. This booklet is a guide for professionals to our service and how to make a referral.

### Who we are

The team consists of learning disability nurses and specialist child learning disability clinical psychologists. We work within a wider multi-professional team alongside education, health and social care professionals such as social workers, occupational therapists, children's community nurses and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). We provide a specialist community learning disability service which includes advice and support to families and to other professionals. We work with children who have profound and severe levels of learning disability (including children who may have an additional diagnosis such as autistic spectrum disorder), supporting the development of community and school-based programmes of support. As such, this service offers both indirect and direct support to children and young people with learning disabilities and their families, and wherever possible, facilitates their access to mainstream services.

### Who do we work with?

The Children and Young People's Learning Disability Team makes provisions for children and young people up to the age of 18, registered with a Devon GP, who have a diagnosis or profound, severe (or moderate where there are child protection issues) learning disabilities. This includes children and young people who have acquired this status.

Referrals will be considered if the child is identified as having a cognitive impairment which is severe or profound, and which limits educational and practical development.

A traditional definition of a learning disability can be taken from the Department of Health document Valuing People: a new strategy for Learning Disability for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2001) includes the presence of:

- A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and to learn new skills.
- A reduced ability to cope independently
- An impairment that started before adulthood with a lasting effect on development.
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Moderate, severe and profound learning disability is defined by the World Mental Health Organisation as an IQ of 50 or less. However, it is important to remember that IQ describes only one aspect of a child or young person and does not 'capture' the whole child.

## How we can support

We can support by providing specialist therapeutic interventions which may include behavioural or functional assessment, assessment of a child or young persons' emotional development, and sleep and nursing assessments.

We also work with children on the autistic spectrum. The team see a large proportion of children with a learning disability who also have a diagnosis or present aspects of an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC). These are usually the children who would be deemed to have severe needs which impact on their behaviour.

The team support parents and carers around developing coping skills and resilience around the impact the learning disability may have on their child, and we adopt innovative ways of supporting the young person to access positive physical health and emotional wellbeing, either by promoting inclusion or directly supporting the young person and their family.

Some of the main areas we offer support around include:

- **Sleep**

All our learning disability nurses have been trained via the Sleep Scotland charity to become sleep counsellors, enabling them to provide counselling for parents and carers of children with a learning disability. Sleep counsellors help parents and carers by giving them specific tried and tested behavioural and cognitive techniques to adapt their child's night-time behaviours.

- **Behaviour**

We can offer support and advice around challenging behaviour, including physical or verbal aggression, self-harm, pica and smearing. We can offer support around routines and communication, as well as devising personalised behavioural plans or interventions, risk assessment and functional analysis.

- **Healthcare needs**

This includes sexual health, attending health appointments, epilepsy, providing visual support, and desensitisation around blood tests, inoculations, dental care, hospital stays, health passports, and 14+ health assessments etc.

- **Independence skills**

We can offer support and advice around developing new skills, personal hygiene, continence, sexual health and puberty,

- **Other**

We provide disability psychotherapy assessments, support around bereavement and emotional health, and support for families' adjustment of their child's diagnosis.