

SECTION 3: LEARNING DISABILITY AND IMPAIRMENT

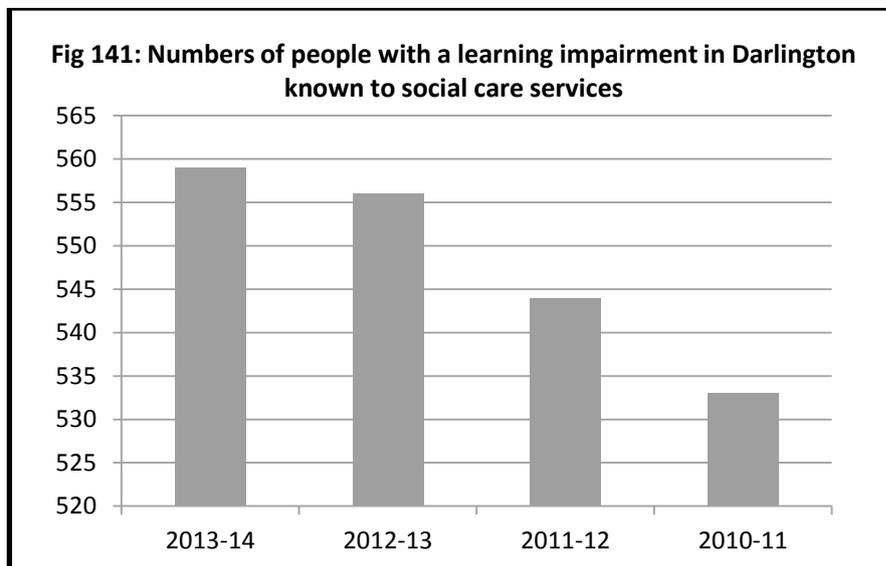
At the Darlington Learning Impairment Network in April 2014, local self-advocates asked that we replace the term learning disability with learning impairment. They felt that this new terminology was more in line with the social model of disability and reflected a new way of thinking about disabled people. In support of this, this document uses that terminology.

There are estimated to be 1.2 million people in England with a mild or moderate learning impairment, a rate of one person in every 40. This ratio would equate to approximately 2,500 people with a learning impairment in Darlington. There are currently approximately 550 people known to adult social care services.

The number of adults with complex support needs is predicted to increase by 1% each year due to increasing life expectancy and the growing number of disabled children who survive into adulthood. These figures do not take into account those people who do not come into contact with mainstream health or social care services, and therefore the exact numbers of people with a learning impairment in England are unknown.

What are the levels of need?

- Unadjusted prevalence of learning impairment (QOF 2013/14) is greater in Darlington (0.7%) than England (0.5%)
- The number of adults on the register in Darlington has been increasing between 2006/07 (377) and 2013/14 (559).



The Learning Impairment Profile for Darlington published in 2015 shows that:

- 90% of adults are living in settled accommodation and no-one lives in unsuitable accommodation;
- There are 559 adults known to social care services, 345 of these have a community based service;
- More than 70% of adults access annual health checks from their GP

- People with a learning impairment have greater health needs than the rest of the population. They are more likely to experience mental illness and are more prone to chronic health problems, epilepsy, and physical and sensory impairments.
- Life expectancy is one of the key public health measures used to determine the health of a population, and although the life expectancy of people with a learning impairment is increasing, they are still 58 times more likely to die before the age of 50, and four times more likely to die from a preventable disease than the rest of the population (Hollins et al 1998).

Which groups are most vulnerable?

The pattern and types of health need experienced by people with a learning impairment differs from that of the general population, as do the main causes of death. This has important public health and commissioning implications particularly when developing the most appropriate community and service responses.

It is known that people with a learning impairment are predisposed to the development of a number of health limiting conditions (Royal College of Nursing, 2006). Many of these conditions can either be prevented, or the severity reduced by early screening, detection and treatment within primary care or community settings. Conditions known to be prevalent within the learning disability population include:

- Respiratory disease is the highest cause of death.
- People are particularly at risk of developing respiratory infections caused by aspiration or reflux if they have swallowing difficulties, and they are less likely to be immunised against infections.
- Epilepsy is more common than in the general population. About 30% of people who have a mild to moderate learning impairment will have epilepsy with the incidence rising to nearly 50% in people who have more complex support needs (National Society for Epilepsy 2007).
- Increased incidence of obesity, poor diet and inactive lifestyles has resulted in a higher incidence of diabetes.
- A high incidence of inactive lifestyles, obesity and hypertension are all risk factors for the development of ischaemic heart disease.
- People with downs syndrome are at higher risk of congenital heart problems.

What are people telling us?

Local people have identified the following as priorities:

- The opportunity to develop more social activities and develop friendships.
- The opportunity for more sport and physical activity
- Good access to public transport
- The opportunity and support to have paid work
- Having accessible information about what is available and how to access support
- People with complex support needs should be supported in their own communities and not in assessment and treatment hospitals
- People rely heavily on public transport.

Other national issues:

- The estimated proportion of people in prison who have a learning impairment that interfere with their ability to cope with the criminal justice system is around 20-30%. Many are unidentified.
- Many people with a learning impairment and autism have little or no contact with friends. One research study found that 31% of adults with an impairment having no contact with friends, compared to 3% of adults without an impairment.
- Six out of 10 women with a learning impairment who become a parent have their children taken in to care.
- Other issues identified by people with learning impairment include employment and educational opportunities, hate crime, benefits changes and the right housing and support being available.

The Darlington Learning Disability Strategy – “One size fits one” also identifies these potential areas of need:-

- There is a small, but increasing number of young people who have complex support needs and they and their families have changing expectations of the support they want for the future.
- There will be a small increase in the number of people with dementia.
- A significant number of people continue to live at home with their families, although this is below the national average.
- A very small number of people are in paid work, despite 65% of people saying that is what they want.
- More than 100 people using a direct payment to pay for their support.
- About 20 adults who are supported to live outside of Darlington, with 4 of these supported outside the region.
- Most adults known to social care are between the ages of 41 and 60.
- About 40 people live in nursing or residential care.
- Over the next 10 years there will be a slight increase in the numbers of people with a learning disability, however they will have more complex support needs and live longer.
- Most people known to social care describe themselves as White British

What are the issues?

Despite considerable progress there are still significant health issues linked to people with a learning disability and a number of recent reports have identified on-going health inequalities. In Darlington approximately 50% of people who are entitled to an annual health check have one. Work is on-going to develop the reasonable adjustments within mainstream services that address some of these inequalities.

Following the scandal at Winterbourne View Hospital work has been undertaken to ensure that those living in Assessment and Treatment Units have been effectively discharged. Darlington had 4 people who were part of the initial audit. All 4 are now living within their communities. The subsequent “Transforming Care” work, that is looking at significantly changing how people with complex supports needs, behaviours that challenge services, mental health problems and/or autism are supported in the future, will result in different types of service and support

and a reduction in the number of people being admitted into hospital for assessment and treatment.

There are seven people currently being supported in NHS services receiving NHS in patient support, plans are being developed for their discharge back into Darlington.

Further data is available using the following link to [Public Health England](#) [external website].