

Learning Disabilities or Learning Difficulties

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A person with a learning disability or learning difficulty

A learning disability affects the overall Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and should not be confused with a learning difficulty. A person may:

- be very good at hiding their disability and may be too embarrassed to ask for help.
- be unable to read and write or retain information
- May agree with you to please you, despite not understanding what you have said
- struggle with basic tasks such as making appointments or finding documents
- never be able to learn the budgeting skills to be able to cope with monthly UC payments
- struggle to make or maintain their claim online and require additional support. A referral to Help to Claim can be considered.

A person will need the claimant commitment to be tailored so that it is realistic and achievable.

So what does this mean for DWP staff?

- Identify if the person you are working with has a learning disability or difficulty
- Make sure that the person gets the right support so that Universal Credit works for them
- Tailor support to the claimant's individual circumstances and refer for appropriate support as necessary
- Understand the claimant may be vulnerable and is treated correctly

How do I know someone has a learning disability or learning difficulty?

- They may say they have a learning difficulty or disability
- They may have had extra support at school or college – such as a statement of special needs, an Education Health and Care plan, School Action or School Action Plus
- They may get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) because they struggle to travel/cook independently
- They may be unable to read or write
- They may struggle to retain or process information
- They may miss important appointments

When you have identified someone has a learning disability you should think about;

Communication

- Speak simply and clearly but do not be patronising
- Check whether you have been understood but be aware they may agree simply to please you
- Provide information in Easy Read format and language

Budgeting

- Refer for extra support by signposting to money guidance/debt advice
- Offer weekly or fortnightly payments
- Give extra help with advance and alternative payment arrangements including paying rent directly to the landlord

The Claimant Commitment – ask yourself:

- Is it reasonable and achievable?
- Is a specialist employment support provider needed?
- Are the number and type of job applications appropriate/applicable?
- Is support needed to prevent the claimant missing appointments?
- Is it tailored to meet the claimants needs/circumstances?
- Do they need a home visit?
- Is it necessary for an appointee to be considered?

Other useful links:

Appointees