

Learning disabilities or learning difficulties: Guidance

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Persons with a learning disability or 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 in order 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 Universal Credit payments
- struggle to make or maintain their claim online and require additional support (a referral to Help to Claim must be considered)

These persons will need the claimant commitment and work plan tailored so that it is realistic and achievable.

What does this mean for DWP staff?

DWP staff members must:

- identify if the person they 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 that the claimant may be vulnerable and is treated correctly

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

A person with potential learning disabilities or difficulties may:

- say they have a learning disability or difficulty
- 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
- get Personal Independence Payment or Disability (PIP), Adult Disability Payment (ADP) Living Allowance because they struggle to travel or cook independently
- be unable to read or write
- struggle to retain or process information
- miss important appointments

When you have identified someone has a learning disability or difficulty 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 or debt advice
- offer weekly or fortnightly payments
- consider extra help with an Advance and Alternative Payment Arrangement including paying rent directly to the landlord

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 and applicable?
- is support needed to prevent the claimant missing appointments?
- is it tailored to meet the claimants needs and circumstances?
- do they need a home visit?
- is it necessary for an appointee to be considered?

Other useful links

Appointee, Personal Acting Bodies and Corporate Acting Bodies
Reasonable adjustments