



Information Sheet: Mild, Moderate and Severe Learning Needs and Disabilities

If a learner is defined as having mild, moderate or severe difficulties, it mainly refers to the amount of support they require to access, progress and participate in your classroom.

Mild – A learner with a mild learning difficulty is usually able to hold a conversation and communicate most of their needs and wishes. They may need some support to understand abstract or complex ideas. Learners are often independent in completing their work for themselves and doing many everyday tasks but need some mild adjustment in order that they can access, participate, and progress. Learners with mild difficulties in cognition will achieve below the expected level of their peers.

Moderate – Learners described as having a moderate learning difficulty require more support as they may learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with appropriate differentiation. They may also need more support to interact with their peers. Learners with cognition difficulties will achieve well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions.

Severe – Learners described as having a severe learning difficulty may understand others' verbal communications but will have little ability to communicate themselves. Someone who has a severe learning disability will have little or no speech, will find it very difficult to learn new skills, and will need support with daily activities such as dressing, washing, eating and keeping safe.

Physical Needs

If the learner's difficulties are due to physical needs the terms 'mild', 'moderate' and 'severe' will depend on how much adult support the learner needs to function within your classroom.

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