

# PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING DISABILITY

Top Tips and ways of working

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# MOLLY'S STORY

- Molly was 19 when she found out she was pregnant
- She lived at home with her parents they were not happy about the pregnancy
- Her boyfriend left her when he found out
- She did not have a job and was reliant on benefits
- She was determined to keep the baby
- No different to many young women across the UK so what happened?

# SO WHAT HAPPENED?

OUTCOME 1	OUTCOME 2
Molly had the baby	Molly had the baby
Her parents kicked her out but she found a flat with the help of the council	Her parents kicked her out her social worker placed her in a temporary mother and baby placement
Services considered Molly young and inexperienced but provided additional support via flying start etc	Services considered Molly unable to look after her baby but did not provide support to teach her the skills she needed
Molly learnt the skills she needed and she and her daughter are thriving together	Molly's daughter was removed from her care and adopted outside the family. Molly has once a year contact from the adoptive parents and has all these contacts in a memory box.

# WHY WERE THE OUTCOMES DIFFERENT?

- In Outcome 2 Molly had a learning disability
- This happened to Molly 10 years ago she is a real person who as a result struggles with her feelings of loss and her frustration at the way professionals judged her without assessment, she describes the mother and baby unit as;

I was watched 24 hours a day but no one told me if I was doing OK no new mother knows what they are doing in the early days but no-one showed me how so I let the baby be in case I hurt her and they judged me for that too!

# What is a learning disability?



**What?**

“

The answer is that **it's different for every person who has one**. But there are some things that are true for **everyone with a learning disability**.

There are also some common (**and not so common**) conditions that will mean the person has a learning disability.

”

MENCAP, 2017

# The Department of Health define learning disability as:

- A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and to learn new skills (impaired intelligence)
- **AND** a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning)
- **AND** started before the age of 18 years, with a lasting effect on development

# The difference between learning disability and learning difficulty

Learning disability	Learning difficulty
Lifelong before 18	Single diagnosis of ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia or Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Longer to learn, need support to learn skills	Attended mainstream education without support
Support to understand complex information	Has GCSE/A levels
May be reliant on non-verbal communication	Able to drive a car/Recorded IQ above 70



## Key message

**Reasonable  
adjustments are  
everyone's  
responsibility**



# WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?

- WHO ARE THE PARENTS HOW MANY ARE THERE?
- Currently, a number of different types of assessment are used to establish the presence of learning disability, including IQ testing (IQ of less than 70) alongside a range of functional assessments. Most parents with learning disabilities fall into the borderline category with an IQ of just above 70, meaning they cannot access a range of services due to strict eligibility criteria (McGregor and colleagues, 2017). In addition, many people do not want the label of learning disability

**MOLLY HAD A LEARNING  
DISABILITY HOW COULD WE  
HAVE DONE THINGS  
DIFFERENTLY?:**

# THERE ARE 5 KEY POINTS OF GOOD PRACTICE WHEN SUPPORTING PARENTS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

1. Communication
2. Services working together
3. Support based on what you can do and what you need
4. Long-term support when needed
5. Access to independent advocacy

# COMMUNICATION

1. Adapt your pace to suit individual needs bite size chunks
2. Use repetition to reinforce
3. Model the behaviour
4. Providing accessible information in a range of formats, including video and online resources, as well as verbal delivery of material
5. Check for understanding

# SERVICES WORKING TOGETHER

1. Many parents with LD will face issues with housing, poverty etc it is essential the services provided to support communicate with each other as well as the individual consider a communication log to share advice given
2. Remember reasonable adjustments **MUST** be provided and are legally required under the Equality Act

# SERVICES THAT PROVIDE SUPPORT BASED ON WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. What help does the individual need
2. Which part of the task is difficult offer practical solutions such as a container which holds the exact amount to make up the bottle
3. Show the individual how then allow them to try!
4. Providing accessible information in a range of formats, including video and online resources, as well as verbal delivery of material

# LONGER TERM SUPPORT WHEN NEEDED

1. Consider the need for ongoing support over usual cut off times
2. Remember a learning disability does not mean you can't learn it just takes longer
3. Often long-term relationships with support are the key to a healthy child and a happy family



# ACCESS TO INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY

1. Advocacy is essential particularly if the courts are involved
2. It can provide ongoing emotional support
3. Often becomes the long-term support for families where they meet other parents in the same position

# MOLLY'S IMPORTANT MESSAGE

- Please
- **DON'T**

judge or patronise us

- **DO**

tell us what we've done well as well as help us when we struggle

And most importantly

**BELIEVE WE CAN DO IT PARENTING IS HARD FOR EVERYONE!**



Thank you

**Any questions?**