Reaching All

An Inclusive Learning Handbook
for Prisons and Young Offender Institutions

Supporting People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Statement of Support from the Director General of the Prison Service

Many of our prisoners and young offenders exhibit unusual behaviour and an inability to engage in the learning process. Often, the reasons why this is so are not immediately clear to staff and so solutions cannot be found, and the right support given.

This handbook will be an invaluable tool for all who work in our establishments. Not only does it advise our teachers on how to work successfully with those experiencing learning difficulties and or disabilities, it also enables all staff to understand their behaviour and respond to their needs.

It is clear that the successful delivery of education and training in prisons and young offender institutions is a priority for the establishment as a whole, not just for the Education Department. The informed, supportive and understanding prison officer is as important as the trained teacher in ensuring that 'hard to reach learners' are engaged and helped to start realising their potential. Many prisoners are embarrassed about their lack of education and training and they will only return to learn in a supportive environment, where their dignity is maintained.

This handbook recognises the value of 'joined-up' working. It is accessible and helps all of us understand the behaviour and needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. I hope that it is used in staff training and as a working document by all staff across our establishments.

Martin Narey
January 2003

Foreword

A multi-agency national working party has considered the role and content of the handbook and SKILL, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, have been commissioned to write it. All were keen that the language and content were accessible to specialist and non-specialist staff and hope that it will be used as a training and working document. Descriptions of the behaviour, needs and learning styles of people with different learning difficulties and disabilities will be invaluable to all and will defuse potentially confrontational situations as well as facilitate learning. Likewise we hope that the list of resources and agencies will be helpful to those wishing to support the needs of those in their care.

In keeping with the Government's reform agenda, this handbook will help ensure that adults and young people, including those who are disadvantaged, receive the educational help and support they need. The use of this handbook should enable staff to help new learners access education and training. Staff from all areas will be vital to this process. The handbook should also encourage managers to reflect further on how learning and skills opportunities can best be delivered.

We hope that you find this handbook useful. Please contact us for additional sections, further information or if you wish to share with others 'good practice from your establishment'. The handbook is presented in ring-binder format so that it can be added to and modified. We look forward to hearing from you.

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'Why I will use this handbook'

There will be some prison officers who take one look at this handbook and say that it will be of no use to them, but what they do not realise is that this handbook could make the job easier. They could avoid a lot of the problems they experience with trainees/prisoners by just discovering a new way to approach and deal with them.

The way the Government wants us to deal with prisoners means that I would use this handbook for advice on many occasions to help me understand unusual behaviour and how to support those with learning difficulties and or disabilities. It will be especially useful with young people. Staff should not try and diagnose prisoners, but seek guidance from this handbook and where necessary contact specialists within the establishment for further assessment of need and advice.

It will not take you long to read the relevant sections and find what you need to help you to support prisoners. This will help bridge the gap between officer and prisoner, so respect and understanding is achieved on both sides.

Michael Hogg
Prison Officer
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Introduction

1.1 What does this handbook do?

This handbook looks at the wide range of disabilities and learning difficulties that people can experience. Many prisoners are likely to experience some kind of disability or learning difficulty although these have often not been formally recognised. The aim of the first part of this document is to help staff to recognise when an individual might be experiencing a particular difficulty and then suggest strategies for working with this person.

The second part of the document looks in greater detail at more general issues of learning and how approaches can be developed to include the full range of learners.

1.2 Who is it for?

This handbook is written for all staff working in prisons. If an individual prisoner has a disability or learning difficulty all staff need to be able to recognise this and know how best to support that individual. The second part of the document specifically emphasises the fact that learning cannot be seen as something that only happens in an educational setting and that all staff need to be involved in supporting people in the learning process. Prison officers play a vital part in this. We hope that this document will be as useful to prison officers as to education staff.

1.3 What do we mean by disability and learning difficulty?

There is no clear dividing line between people who can be described as having a disability or learning difficulty and those who do not have one. For example, most people's sight deteriorates as they get older. This does not necessarily mean that they then are referred to as 'partially sighted' but it does mean that they are likely to have more difficulties in seeing than when they were young.

Most of us have some difficulty in certain types of learning and learning some things will be harder for us than others. This does not mean that we all refer to ourselves as having a 'learning difficulty' but it does mean that everyone learns in different ways and experiences a range of difficulties.

In many ways then, it is a question of degree. In this guide we will be looking at instances where a disability or a learning difficulty has a significant effect on a person's ability to carry out every day activities and/or their ability to participate in learning activities.

In the prison population there may be people who have never had their disability or learning difficulty acknowledged (for example someone who has always known they have great difficulty in reading and writing but have never had a formal assessment). There may also be people who know they have a disability (for example they have

difficulty in hearing) but they have always tried to keep this hidden as they see it as a sign of weakness. If staff are able to help them acknowledge and understand their disability or learning difficulty and help them see that there are ways in which they can overcome the problems it brings, then this can make a big difference to the way they cope with life both in prison and when they leave.

Disability and Learning Difficulty

2.1 **General Introduction to Disability and Learning Difficulty**

Before looking at specific categories of disability and learning difficulty it is important to look more generally at what disabilities and learning difficulties are and how they are regarded. This section will cover:

● Different ways of looking at disability and learning difficulty.

● The effect that home or social environment has on learning difficulty or disability.

● General principles of working with disabled people or people with a learning difficulty.

● Words and phrases currently used to describe different disabilities.

Different ways of looking at disability and learning difficulty

Historically people have often seen disability and learning difficulty in a very negative way. Disabled people have been referred to as 'abnormal' or 'subnormal' and many of the words that were used to describe certain disabilities have become common terms of abuse (for example, 'spastic' or 'moron').

In recent years many disabled people have been trying to change the way in which other people look at disability. There has been a move to looking at disability as a social rather than an individual problem. Although an individual might have a particular disability, the barriers that arise are often created by other people. For example, instead of seeing a wheelchair user as a problem because he cannot enter a building, seeing it as the problem of the designer who has created a building with no ramps or lifts. Likewise, instead of seeing a person with a learning difficulty who cannot read complicated written instructions as being the problem, seeing it as the problem of the organisation who issued the instructions not putting them into simpler language or finding other ways to give the information.

This change in the way people with disabilities and learning difficulties are regarded requires a complete change of attitudes. There has to be a shift from seeing disability and learning difficulty as conditions that make people fundamentally different from the rest of society, to seeing them as particular differences that society needs to accommodate. There also has to be a shift of attitude from scorning or pitying disabled people to including them in a society in which everyone has different skills and aptitudes.

The effect of home and social environment

As we have seen above the negative effects of disabilities are far less severe if society accommodates them. It is also true that a disability can be less of a handicap if a disabled person receives positive personal support – for example, someone who is blind will be better able to manage if he has been taught strategies for coping with his disability, such as learning Braille, when he is young. In contrast to this many disabilities, and particularly learning difficulties, are made significantly worse if an individual has not been given appropriate help and support. This is likely to be particularly true of members of the prison population. In the following section there are many examples of individuals who may, as a child, for a variety of reasons, have had particular difficulty in learning. Instead of receiving encouragement and support from family and school they may have been made to feel that they were lazy or stupid. These attitudes contributed to making them feel insecure and worthless and so have increased their difficulty in learning and turned what might have been a minor difficulty into a significant disability.

General principles for working with people who have disabilities or learning difficulties

When you work with people with disabilities or learning difficulties it is important not just to focus on the specific disability or learning difficulty but to follow certain general principles. These include:

● Treat people as individuals, not conditions. Individuals do not want to be labelled first and foremost as 'the deaf one' or 'the one with a learning difficulty'.

● Don't assume that you know exactly what a particular disability will mean to an individual. Instead ask the individuals and listen to what they say. They are the experts on the effect of their particular disability.

● Look at how your own practice or the practice of the institution might be making the disability a problem – for example how a partially deaf person might not be understanding you because you never face them directly when you talk to them.

● Be aware of your own attitudes – it is often staff attitudes (such as embarrassment, patronisation or irritation) rather than an individual's disability that can cause barriers.

● Try to use a variety of teaching styles. When you write something down also read it out. Use practical as well as theoretical approaches.

●   Encourage an attitude where all differences and difficulties in learning are openly discussed (not just those of a person with a particular disability) and where all learners have the opportunity to discuss the particular ways in which they learn best.

●   Have moments when you can just observe what works well for a particular person and what doesn't – and make sure this includes observing strengths as well as things that a person finds difficult.

●   Many learners with disabilities or learning difficulties may well have had a negative experience of learning at school. Think of ways in which you can allow them to have a fresh start and make an adult learning environment which is distinctly different from a school one.

Terminology

People are often worried about the correct words to use when referring to disabilities. This is not surprising as the terminology keeps changing as groups of disabled people try to establish terms which are free from negative images. Currently the terms approved by groups of disabled people themselves are:

●   People or person with a disability or disabled people or person – Not 'handicapped' or 'the disabled'.

●   Person with a learning difficulty or a learning disability – Not mentally handicapped.

●   Wheelchair user – Not 'wheelchair bound' or 'confined to a wheelchair'.

●   A person who is blind or partially sighted, or visually impaired – Not 'visually handicapped'.

●   A deaf person or person who is partially hearing and a person with a speech difficulty – Not 'deaf and dumb'.

●   A person with mental health difficulties – Not 'psychiatrically disturbed'.

●   When referring to non-disabled people avoid using the word 'normal' as this implies disabled people are abnormal.

2.2 Specific categories of disability and learning difficulty

Learning difficulty

There is no clear dividing line between those who have a learning difficulty and those who do not. Some kinds of learning difficulty are clearly identified such as Down's Syndrome. Other people can have a particular problem with reading and writing that might be caused by Dyslexia. However, many people have far less easily definable difficulties. They may well have missed out on schooling, either because of periods of illness or by failing to attend. This can mean they have large gaps in their knowledge, which then makes them feel there is no point in trying to learn anything new. Their failure in learning may mean that they have a real fear of trying anything new because they are sure they will fail yet again. This can result either in them refusing to move on to any new aspect of learning – because of a fear of failing yet again – or hiding what they cannot do by exhibiting anger and negativity at anything that is suggested to them.

In addition to this people with learning difficulties might have particular problems in:

- Remembering and retaining information.

- Understanding abstract concepts as learners often relate much more strongly to practical activities.

- Following sequences, for example in following through instructions.

- Concentrating for any length of time.

- Transferring the principles that they have learnt to other activities.

Case Study

Tom always found school work difficult and never learnt the basics of reading and writing. His response to this failure was to behave badly at school and teachers tended to react to his behaviour rather than focusing on his difficulty in learning. His parents did not offer him much support. His father, who himself had difficulties with reading and writing, tended to tell him that school work wasn't that important. His mother constantly compared him with his elder sister who was doing well at school. While still at primary school Tom started going around with a group of older boys and often missed school. This increased when he went into secondary school. When with these older boys he experienced a status and role that he had never felt at school. He was always easily led by others and this resulted in him being persuaded to turn to shoplifting and more serious crime and eventually he was placed in a Young Offender Institution.

Tom attended classes at the Institution, but was obviously very embarrassed by his inability to read and write. He has had periods of trying to apply himself to learning but finds it very hard both to concentrate and to remember what he has learned. He often becomes frustrated in class and has angry outbursts when he says he is just being given 'kid's stuff' and anyhow he doesn't need reading and writing'.

How might you help Tom to develop some of the skills he has missed while ensuring that he feels he is being treated like an adult?

Some ways of working with people who have learning difficulties:

● Find out what the person is interested in and work from this. People who have been disengaged from learning need to feel that this time it is really going to add to their lives and make a difference to them. In this way you can begin to help them take responsibility for their own learning.

● Talk to individuals and groups about their past learning experiences. Try and understand why they have been turned off learning and work out new strategies with them rather than repeating what has already failed.

● Find ways of ensuring that learning is age appropriate. Even if learners are working at a very basic level they need to feel that they are not being treated like children.

● Always explain things clearly and check that they are following what you are saying.

● When they have difficulties with remembering things, work with them on creating strategies that they feel might help them to remember.

● If they have difficulties with concentrating, plan lessons so that there are a variety of short activities.

● Encourage all learners in the group to ask for help so that this is seen as an important part of learning and not a sign of failure.

● Make learning as practical as possible using a range of materials (visual and spoken as well as written).

● Find ways to raise the status of learning – for example, many people who have found writing very difficult may feel differently about it if they can begin to use a computer rather than pen and paper.

Autistic Spectrum Disorders

People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders have difficulty with communicating and particular difficulties with social relationships and making friends. An increasing number of young people and children are being diagnosed as falling within this spectrum. The Autistic Spectrum includes people with Asperger's Syndrome*. People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders display the complete range of abilities from those with severe learning difficulties to those with average or above average intelligence. The nature of their difficulties is often misunderstood leading to inappropriate treatment, bullying, social isolation and depression.

People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders find it very hard to understand the social rules that most people automatically follow and so can find it difficult to join in with conversation, make small talk, or know when to allow someone else to speak. This difficulty can also mean that they do not always pick up on subtle social cues which let most people know what is going to happen next in a social situation, for example a change in the tone of someone's voice which means they are about to leave. They may be described as 'socially odd' and make remarks that seem perfectly appropriate to them, but can appear quite inappropriate to other people. They will be unaware of the effect that their words or actions have on other people. They may ask repetitive questions, seeming to take no notice of the answer. They may also have great difficulty in making eye contact, or their eye contact can be unusual.

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* Asperger's Syndrome is at the milder end of the autistic spectrum.

People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders can also have great difficulty with understanding abstract concepts. They may use language very literally and so find it extremely hard if other people use language loosely or metaphorically.

Their difficulty with generalising can mean that they find it hard to transfer from one situation to another and so may be described as 'rigid' or 'inflexible'. They are often very reliant on a fixed routine and find even very small changes to this extremely disconcerting. They may have obsessive or stereotypical behaviour such as extreme orderliness or tidiness or always wanting to sit in the same seat and become very upset when this cannot happen. They may also appear preoccupied with a particular interest and spend hours studying everything about this one subject or talk about it regardless of the interest of the listener. This can be a source of conflict and annoyance for those around them.

A further difficulty experienced by people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders concerns the way in which they receive information and respond to sensation. They may find certain sounds, touch or smells very disconcerting. They may also take a long time to make sense of information.

People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders often have good skills and abilities in certain areas and may be very knowledgeable about a subject that interests them or where concrete skills are involved such as mathematics and computers. They cope best in an environment that is calm and where they are helped to predict what will happen. They may prefer visual or written instructions rather than relying on oral communication.

Case Study

Kevin had always found it very hard to relate to other people. He was a loner at school and was seen by the other pupils as being a bit 'weird' and was bullied by some of them. From a very young age he became obsessed with certain things. He was fascinated by locks and the way they worked and had a huge collection of keys. He did relatively well at school so long as he had a fixed routine, but when there was any change to this he became very upset. His main support was his mother who understood his needs, adapted to them, and in many ways protected him from the rest of the world.

When he was a young man Kevin's mother died and he found it very hard to adapt to life without her. He started spending some time with one particular young man who already had a record for breaking and entering. They began to carry out several thefts, aided by Kevin's ability with locks, and before long he was in prison.

In prison Kevin is considered odd as he never makes eye contact and often makes inappropriate comments. He is very isolated as he cannot enter into the banter of other inmates and has no friends. At one level he manages alright with the regular routine of prison life but if any changes occur he becomes very distressed.

Recently he has been attending education classes. His tutor has no knowledge of autistic spectrum disorders and cannot understand his obsession with always writing about the same thing. She feels he is making fun of her because of the way he always follows her instructions literally. When she asks him at the end of a lesson to put his book away 'where you put it last week', instead of just placing it on a pile with the other books he insists on going through the whole pile so that it is in exactly the same place as it was the week before.

In what ways might you create ways of working with Kevin which ensure that his particular needs are being catered for?

Some ways of working with people who have autistic spectrum disorders:

● Understand that behaviour which may seem bizarre or rude to you is not a deliberate attempt to offend but stems from a person who sees the world in a different way.

● Try to ensure that the person with autistic spectrum disorders has a particular member of staff who they can go to if they are worried about anything or a written instruction about what to do if worried.

● Try to provide a calm environment with as few distractions as possible and clear routine to sessions. Be very clear in advance if there are going to be changes to this.

● Make sure the person understands what work they are meant to do, how long they are to do it for, when it has finished and what happens next.

● Take care to use clear and unambiguous language. It may be preferable to give written rather than oral instructions.

● Be sensitive to the fact that people with autistic spectrum disorders might find group work extremely challenging or may be disturbed by background noise.

● Remember that even good natured teasing can be misinterpreted as criticism.

● Provide a visual timetable with work organised from left to right and from top to bottom'.

● Ensure consistency of approach.

Dyslexia

It is thought by those working in the area of Dyslexia that about 10% of the population may have some degree of Dyslexia and 4% have difficulties that are severe enough for them to require some specialist support. It is important to remember that there are many reasons why people in prisons may have difficulties with reading and writing and certainly not all of these will be Dyslexia related.

Dyslexia is not related to intelligence and people with Dyslexia can cover the full range of abilities. People with Dyslexia have difficulties with processing written language – that is to say that they find it difficult to make the link between spoken words and their written form. Consequently dyslexic people have significant difficulty with reading and writing. Sometimes this is caused by 'auditory processing' difficulties – that is to say people have difficulty in learning the sounds that letters make although they may be very good at remembering the way words look. Sometimes it is caused by 'visual processing' difficulties – that is to say they have difficulty in recognising words, even very common words, when they see them in written form. Some dyslexic people have 'motor integration problems' – that is to say they may have difficulty forming words on the page when writing and following a line of print. Many dyslexic people have a combination of all these difficulties.

Dyslexic people are likely to have some of the following difficulties:

● They can confuse sounds and so often mis-read or mis-write a word.

● They can have problems in recognising letters or words when reading, or remembering the order of letters when writing. They can reverse the order of letters or the form of letters.

● They can have difficulty remembering information, particularly information especially if given in sequence, such as a list of instructions. They can be very good at remembering when they really understand something.

● They can have difficulty in hand writing and thus produce work that seems very untidy.

● They can confuse directions and get lost easily, even when given clear directions.

● They can have difficulty with organising material.

There is often a mismatch between what dyslexic people can do and what they cannot. They might be very good at performing certain skills yet still have enormous difficulty with simple reading and writing. Dyslexic people are often 'lateral' thinkers; that is they may approach a problem in a different way to a step by step, logical approach. They are also often learners who like to work on concrete, practical tasks and learn from experience rather than receiving information second hand from a teacher.

Case Study

Whilst at school Delroy had great difficulty in anything that involved reading and writing. Although able in many areas of work he was given reading books written for younger children. His written work was always extremely messy and often hardly decipherable. Delroy was very aware of this difference between his general ability and his performance in reading and writing. He would constantly see children who he knew were no more intelligent than him getting much better marks. This made him increasingly frustrated. His response was to prove himself in other ways. He began to take time off school and act as a ring leader whom other younger boys looked up to.

Delroy is currently in a Young Offender's Institution. Here he continues to act with bravado and encourages other young men to regard him as something of a hero. He has had periods of trying to gain skills in reading and writing, but easily gets frustrated at how difficult these subjects are for him and the gap between what he wants to read and write and what he is able to.

How might you work with Delroy in order to re-engage him in learning?

Some ways of working with people who are dyslexic:

● Many adults who are dyslexic have not been officially assessed. The Resources Section gives further information on what to do if you are working with someone who you feel would benefit from further assessment.

● Talk to learners about what they find difficult and what methods have failed in the past and do not repeat strategies that have already failed.

● Help learners to understand their own ways of learning and what works best for them and encourage them to create their own strategies, for example for remembering sequences.

● Work with learners on what most interests them and what they need to learn. Follow their own aspirations as this will help to make the content of their learning adult and relevant.

● Use teaching strategies that match the individual's learning style – for example, if a learner thinks very visually use highlighted or bold typeface for certain words.

● If learners tend to confuse letters, work with them specifically on learning to recognise the difference between the sounds made by different letters.

● Dyslexic people often find white paper difficult to read from and write on. Try using other coloured paper, for example light grey or cream.

● Encourage learners to make visual representations such as mind maps (where information is set out in a visual format often using different colours so that the learner can see it all at once rather than having to follow through sequentially).

● Recognise the importance of technology. Using a computer gives status to the work and allows the learner to produce a well presented piece that looks good. They can try out spelling variations knowing that they can always delete any errors. Some dyslexic people may always have great difficulty with spelling and should be encouraged to learn to use technical aids such as spell checks.

● Recognise that learning may need to be broken down into small, achievable units and allow time for repetition and reinforcement.

People with mental health difficulties

There can be many different causes of mental health difficulties. This section will not attempt to go into different diagnoses but will look at some of the more common symptoms that people with mental health difficulties can show.

As with learning difficulties there is no clear dividing line between people who can be described as having a mental health difficulty and those who do not. Most of us will, at some points in our lives, experience times when we are particularly upset or anxious. There are times when these feelings can become more acute and affect our ability to carry on normally with life. Sometimes this is triggered by a particular event, although some people can develop mental ill health for no obvious, external reason.

While some mental health difficulties can cause people to behave irrationally or at times violently the most common symptoms are depression, stress and anxiety. People who experience these feelings at a severe level will have fewer coping strategies than other people and can think there is no way of escaping from the state they are in. They may find it difficult to engage in any new activities either because they are afraid they will not be able to cope or because they feel there is no point. They may also be very anxious and need more reassurance than other people.

Mental health difficulties tend not to be static. Individuals might have very markedly good and bad days, or a period when they feel depressed and unable to do anything followed by a period when they feel very active. This can make it difficult for other people to relate to them and for them to engage in group activities. Sometimes they can be very reluctant to interact in any way, while at other times they may be very keen to talk and tend to dominate the conversation.

There is a lot of stigma about mental health difficulties. People can feel more comfortable if they think there is a 'normal' type of behaviour and feel easily threatened when other people behave in ways which are markedly different from this norm.

Because of this many people with mental health difficulties feel ashamed of their condition. They feel ashamed of having had a mental health difficulty and this may result in them lacking confidence and trying to hide any difficulties they have.

People who have been diagnosed as having mental health difficulties might be on some kind of medication. Although this can help them with some of the more acute symptoms the medication itself can often have side affects. It can make concentration and memory very difficult and can also make people feel very tired.

Case Study

As a child Lee did well at school and had several friends. He got a good job when he left school. He also married and had two children. When he was a young adult Lee experienced a series of traumatic events. His mother, whom he was very close to, died; his wife left him for another man and he was made redundant from his job. His immediate reaction was severe depression. He was treated medically for this but found the medicine had the effect of making him constantly tired and muddled and so he stopped taking it. After this Lee had periods of acute anxiety and also times when he felt very paranoid and was sure that people were talking and laughing about him. He experienced times when he reacted very angrily and ended up in prison for serious assault.

Arrival in prison triggered another deep depression. Staff and inmates felt that Lee was being difficult and refusing to co-operate. He was given medication which made him feel permanently drowsy. In education classes Lee often appears to be in another world not wanting to engage in any activities. Occasionally he will join in a group activity but sometimes this ends up with him getting very upset saying that the others are getting at him.

What kinds of learning situations might help Lee to benefit from his education classes?

As we have seen mental health difficulties can take many different forms. Fundamentally, it is important to see people as individuals and not to have preconceptions or prejudices as to how an individual is likely to behave.

Some ways of working with people who have mental health difficulties:

● Recognise that some learners may need considerable time to settle into a class and feel comfortable enough to begin to address their learning.

● Plan flexible learning situations which include a variety of activities.

● Understand that some individuals might have real anxiety about trying new activities; include activities in which people can experience immediate success.

● If someone is particularly drowsy in your class discuss this with other staff. The effects of medication can be worse in the morning and it might be better, if possible, to alter the time of a person's learning session.

● If someone has particular difficulties with remembering, discuss different memory strategies with them and see what might work best for them.

● In group discussions accept that an individual might have times when they feel unable to participate and allow them to withdraw.

● Establish clear ground rules for discussions, for example one person speaking at a time.

● Recognise that some individuals might feel threatened by discussions demanding personal information; respect their wish for privacy.

● Recognise the boundaries of your own role as teacher or officer, and be clear when there is a need to refer to other staff, for example someone who has counselling experience.

Emotional and behavioural difficulties

In this section the term 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' is used to describe situations when an individual's emotional disturbance makes it very hard for them to behave in ways that allow them to conform to the general rules of social interaction. Such extreme behaviour can occur for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it occurs when an individual who has one of the difficulties listed above has not had their particular difficulty understood. For example, someone who has Autistic Spectrum Disorder that is never recognised and responded to, hence becomes increasingly frustrated and reacts in socially inappropriate ways.

There are however other individuals who may not have any of the difficulties listed above but whose childhood experiences have left them with an emotional disturbance that makes it very difficult for them to react in a balanced way to regular situations. Negative childhood experiences such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse can leave individuals extremely emotionally disturbed. While some individuals have a resilience that enables them to cope with this, others may develop a vulnerability resulting in behaviour that makes it very hard for them to fit into society. Sometimes this vulnerability results in defensive behaviour that can make an individual bully or act aggressively. In other cases it can make individuals extremely fearful of entering into any relationship or new activity. In both cases the intensity of the emotional disturbance and its corresponding behaviour tends to dominate everything else; this can make it very difficult for the individual to lead a regular life and enter into a learning situation.

Case Study

As a young child Wayne was physically and sexually abused at home. He became increasingly withdrawn and found it very hard to interact with other young people. He was coerced by members of his family to join them in criminal activities and is now in a Young Offender Institution. His behaviour appears to be dominated by fear. He is extremely nervous at joining in any activity and always appears to be watching over his shoulder as if he is afraid of being got at by someone else. Wayne attends classes and has expressed an interest to catch up with the learning he missed at school. However, his intense fear and vulnerability dominates everything else and inhibits him from trying anything new. It also disrupts his attendance, as some days when extremely anxious he refuses to come to classes. He is often placed on report for refusing to attend.

What steps might you take to help give Wayne the confidence to begin to learn new things?

Case Study

Jaz's father was very violent and often drunk. As a young child he was often bullied and beaten up physically. His reaction was to grow up believing that he had to be violent too. He became terrified of ever appearing weak or vulnerable and, at primary school, would intimidate other children into doing what he said. At a young age he was sent to a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Although staff at the school tried to engage him Jaz's increasingly violent behaviour made it very difficult for him to complete any learning. He joined a street gang and soon after killing a member of another group, found himself in a Young Offender Institution. At the institution his bullying behaviour has continued and many other inmates are afraid of him. Jaz missed out on a lot of basic education when at school and knows that there are many things he has not learned. He has attended classes but his sense of being in a situation where he does not feel on top has resulted in him having several angry outbursts, which have disrupted the rest of the group.

What steps might you take to try and create a situation where Jaz can be involved in learning?

Some ways of working with people who have emotional or behavioural difficulties:

● Look at the other learning difficulties mentioned in this chapter and see if any of them seem to apply to the individual you are working with. Sometimes other difficulties that have never been recognised can result in frustration, which shows itself in extreme behaviour.

● Try not to feel personally put down by negative behaviour and not to allow yourself to respond aggressively in return even if the behaviour is directed towards you. The behaviour is likely to be a symptom of other, deeper causes and should not be seen as a personal attack.

● Try and create a situation where you can have some control over who is in a particular group. Often those who are extremely vulnerable and nervous will find it very difficult to learn if they are in a group with others who intimidate them.

● Establish clear ground rules in discussion with the group – for example only one person speaking at a time.

● Try to find out the particular interests of an individual and something that might give them a purpose to learn, then build on this.

● Use practical methods. Often learners who have emotional and behavioural difficulties are those who need to experience things for themselves and be actively engaged in order to learn.

● Use a range of methods and pace their learning so that those who find it hard to concentrate for long periods can have learning broken up into smaller chunks.

● Find out where a learner's strengths lie and build on these. People with emotional and behavioural difficulties will often have very low self esteem (however much they may try to disguise this) and need to be reassured that they are good at things and can achieve.

● Create situations where there are constant opportunities for small successes.

● Try to raise the status of learning. Many of these people will have missed out on learning at school. They will often be functioning at a lower level than their actual ability and may well feel embarrassed by the fact that they are learning things which seem childish. Ensure that materials are adult and relevant and, if possible, use other methods, for example computers, to raise the status of learning.

People with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

A common example of an emotional/behavioural difficulty is ADHD, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. There is a great deal of controversy surrounding ADHD, with contending views and theories about the validity of diagnostic methods, appropriate treatment and characteristic symptoms. One of the issues is that the some of the symptoms of ADHD are characteristic of other mental health problems, or conversely, of 'normal' behaviour in everyone. ADHD can be severe in childhood but symptoms tend to diminish in adulthood. In fact there is some contention about its existence in adults at all.

The main symptoms of ADHD are being easily distracted, having a short attention span, impulsive behaviour, such as blurting out or interrupting, and over-activity generally, for example, fidgeting and moving about. People with ADHD may also have mood swings. They may be forgetful, and not listen properly, appearing to ignore instructions. They may make careless mistakes because of poor concentration. They may get frustrated or excited easily, and sometimes may have an explosive temper. In some cases over-activity may lead to more extreme behaviour such as kicking furniture or throwing pens.

In this way ADHD interferes in a variety of ways with the person's ability to function normally in their day-to-day activities, learning programmes and relationships. In an education context in particular, someone with ADHD may be very disruptive.

As discussed earlier, diagnosing ADHD can be difficult since it is common for many people to have some of the symptoms of this disorder to some degree, such as difficulty paying attention or being easily distracted. Also, some of the symptoms of ADHD can manifest as anxiety or depression. Many people diagnosed with ADHD are treated with a drug called Ritalin. There is a lot of controversy about this drug. There are concerns about how it affects the developing brain and growth in children and whether it is appropriate to control behaviour with medication. Many believe that it is mis-prescribed and over-prescribed where other interventions would be more appropriate.

Case Study

Craig did badly at school in all subjects and re-sat his exams at college, repeating a year without improving his marks. His teachers described him as disruptive and aggressive in class and stated that he had difficulty paying attention during structured and unstructured activities. He would only sit still for a minute at a time. Craig was rebellious at home as well. His parents were divorced and he rarely saw his father. His mother, overwhelmed by the task of raising Craig without help, gave up. Craig, left to his own devices, stayed out late every night, sometimes not coming home at all, and failing to rise in the morning. He turned to crime gradually. He left college and started hanging around his local pub all day. He fell in with a gang of unemployed young men who made a living from petty thieving and burglary. They often used him as a decoy, exploiting his tendencies to distract passers by with his bizarre behaviour. Craig is now in prison and wants to improve his qualifications.

How would you work with Craig to make a fresh start in his learning?

What steps could you take to make his learning environment a positive one?

Some ways of working with people who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder:

● If a person with ADHD starts to become disruptive, call on him or her to read a passage aloud, answer a question or anything else you can think of. This will help get the student's mind back on task.

● To help make transitions from one activity to another, do a countdown for the last several minutes of the activity. For instance, announce when there are five minutes left, then four minutes, three minutes.

● Engage all the time with your learners by giving them simple decisions to make throughout your teaching sessions.

● Allow doodling – this can aid concentration.

● Post monthly calendar up. On it mark project due dates, and unit begin/end dates. This will give a focus to learning.

● When planning lessons, never plan on more than 20 minutes of seatwork or inactivity. Plan to alternate activity with inactivity.

●   Always face the group when you speak to them. Underline key words in the directions for handouts and workbook activities.

●   Always say **and** write instructions for activities. Many students have problems comprehending one method or the other.

●   When writing tests, intersperse easier questions throughout. This helps keep the motivational level high.

●   Try not to seat those with ADHD near sources of noise, eg heaters, doors or windows.

People who are blind or partially sighted

Some people will be born blind or with partial sight but a far larger number will acquire a visual impairment later in life. There are many myths around blindness. People tend to think there is a clear line between 'seeing' and 'not seeing'. In fact the terms 'blind' and 'partially sighted' cover a whole range of difficulties, from people who are only slightly affected to the very few people who cannot distinguish dark from light.

The most obvious difficulty which sight problems bring to a learning situation is a difficulty with seeing detail, whether this is very small objects or print. Those who have experienced sight problems since childhood may also have had a greater difficulty in acquiring some skills because they have missed out on many aspects of informal learning. They may not have seen everyday signs and words around them. In addition to this people with sight problems may find hand writing particularly difficult.

The needs of people who are blind or partially sighted will vary according to the degree of their sight problem. Many of them will require print that is larger than usual and text that is clearly laid out. However it is important to remember that a few people have what is called 'tunnel vision' which means that they can only see a small range of print at a time and so can manage better if print is kept small. The colour of the paper will also affect some people's ability to see text.

Other people who find it very difficult to read text may prefer to have information in other formats, in particular on tape or via some kind of speech software which works in conjunction with a personal computer.

It is often assumed that most people who are blind will use Braille. In fact only about 3% of those who are registered blind and partially sighted actually use Braille and these are usually people who have been blind since birth or early childhood.

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Case Study

Collette is in her forties and has had several spells in prison. As a young child she had some sight problems and was prescribed strong glasses which she hated wearing as other children would tease her about them. She tried to pretend that her eyesight was actually alright and as she got older she would often miss optician appointments. Her sight continued to deteriorate, as did her denial. This was in part because she was becoming increasingly anxious that she might be told that there was something really wrong with her sight and that she would lose it altogether. Over the years she has developed many coping strategies which mean that she can manage quite well in day to day activities but she is having increasing difficulty in reading and writing at the classes she attends. Whenever the tutor asks her about this Collette insists there is no problem. The tutor is concerned because she feels Collette is not making the progress that she could.

What adaptations might you need to make to enable Collette to benefit from education sessions?

Some ways of working with people who are blind or partially sighted:

● Ask people what adaptations help them most. Ensure that this is done as privately as possible. As we have seen in the case study some people can feel embarrassed by being seen as different from others.

● Ensure that lighting is good and that people with a sight problem can chose where they sit so the light is best for them. Although good lighting is important sometimes lighting can cause a glare which can make seeing difficult for people with certain visual impairments.

● Produce materials in an uncluttered layout with a clear typeface (a sans serif font like Ariel is usually good) in point 14 size. This is good practice for all learners although some might need a larger print. Black print on white or yellow is usually effective although some learners may have individual preferences.

● If learners have real problems with print allow them to hear material on a tape.

● Use blue or black pens rather than red or orange on a whiteboard, remembering that the glare of a whiteboard can be difficult for some learners. Always read out what you have written on a board.

● If you are using computers ensure that they are accessible to blind or partially sighted learners. Some learners may need a specially adapted keyboard with larger letters. Others may need to use speech software.

People who are deaf or partially hearing

Some people may have been born deaf while others may become deaf either gradually or suddenly as a child or an adult. Most have some residual hearing, whilst only a very small proportion has no hearing at all.

There is an important difference between those people who become deaf before they learn to speak and those who become deaf later in life. People who become deaf before they learn to speak may have difficulty in speaking clearly because they have never heard the proper sounds words make. (see section on speech difficulties below). This does not mean that they are any less intelligent than people who have learned to speak. They are also likely to find it much harder to acquire spoken and written language and understand abstract concepts.

People who have been born profoundly deaf may well have learned to use sign language. British Sign Language (BSL) is a language in its own right and has its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary. Learners who use sign language will need to be taught both grammar and the vocabulary that is unfamiliar to them. If staff do not use sign language, deaf individuals will need to have their own sign language interpreter. They may also require a note-taker.

People who are partially deaf may rely on lip-reading. Lip-reading is not a straightforward activity as it is very difficult or impossible to read some sounds or grammatical structures. Some particularly difficult sounds to read are **r, s, z, g, ng, t, d, n, l**. Word endings can also be difficult for example differentiating between walk**ing**, walk**s** and walk**ed**.

Technology can enhance deaf people's access to language. This can include:

● Minicom, which is a text telephone, email and text messaging on mobile phones.

● Hearing aids. Hearing aids do not compensate for hearing loss in the way that spectacles do for poor sight. They work by amplifying sounds but this means that all sounds are amplified so that background noise can be a real problem.

● Radio hearing aids which require the teacher to wear a transmitter and microphone.

● Loops which can either be a permanent fixture of a room or be a portable loop which can be set up in any suitable room and worn around the neck.

Partial hearing loss can be very common in young children. This is often a temporary stage which the child grows out of. If it is not picked up on, it can result in the child having difficulty in learning because they do not hear everything that is said. Primary schools are now much better at arranging for children in reception class to have hearing tests. However, in the past slight hearing loss was often not recognised and children were assumed to be inattentive or slow learners.

> ## Case Study
>
> George is in his forties and is in prison for the first time. He had some difficulties with hearing as a child but, although at one point he was referred for a hearing test, his family missed the appointment and this was never followed up. As a young child George was unable to hear everything that the teacher said particularly when it came to recognising distinct sounds needed to learn to read and write. His attention used to wander and, because no-one was aware of his hearing difficulty, he was assumed to be lazy and lacking in concentration. He never learnt the basics of reading and writing and, as he became older, became increasingly frustrated and began to exhibit challenging behaviour.
>
> George's particular hearing difficulty did not get better as he became older. He developed considerable coping strategies and found ways of managing quite well in social situations. When he was an adult he thought about going to the doctor about his hearing difficulty but he hated the thought of wearing a hearing aid. In prison he copes with most activities, but in the basic skills classes he has the same difficulties which he experienced at school. He cannot hear everything that the teacher is saying so loses concentration and considers himself stupid and unable to learn.

What changes do you need to make in your teaching to try and ensure George is included?

Some ways of working with people who are deaf or partially hearing:

● If you think that an individual might have a hearing difficulty try and arrange for yourself or someone else to have a private place to talk to them about the advantages of having a proper diagnosis.

● Face the person at all times when speaking to them. Speak clearly and at a normal speed but do not shout.

● Arrange lighting and seating so that everyone's face is well lit and avoid standing in front of a window or light that puts your face in the shadow.

● Do not speak while your back is turned to write something on the board.

● Use short clear statements and vocabulary and, if something does not seem to have been understood, find a different way of saying it.

● Make use of visual information as much as possible, such as pictures, labels, diagrams and key words.

● Write down words or statements whenever possible and check that these have been understood.

● Group work can be extremely difficult for deaf people. Make sure only one person speaks at a time and get learners to indicate when they are speaking or gesture towards the person who is speaking.

● Keep background noise to a minimum. If possible use a carpeted room as this absorbs sound.

● Remember that loud noises can be very distressing for someone using a hearing aid.

● If you are working with an interpreter in the room give time for them to interpret and ensure that you always direct your comments to the deaf person and not the interpreter.

People with physical disabilities

When people think of physical disabilities they often automatically think of people in wheelchairs. In fact only a very small proportion of those with a physical disability are actually wheelchair users. Physical disabilities can be temporary or permanent; they can be stable or changing; they can affect one particular part of the body or the whole body; they can be pain free or they can cause an individual considerable pain.

The effects of physical disabilities will vary according to the kind of disability a person has. Some people might have a condition where sitting for long periods causes them considerable pain. Others might have a difficulty with hand use which makes handwriting particularly hard. Some people who have physical disabilities that are caused by a neurological condition, whilst others who have had an accident and have suffered brain damage may also have difficulties in the way they perceive things. They can find it hard to locate the correct place on a page or to move from left to right when reading or writing. Their disability

might also cause them to have difficulties with short term memory, with understanding the information they have received and with speech (see section on speech difficulties below).

Case Study

Abdul was an intelligent and very fit young person who was involved in a serious car accident when he was a teenager. The accident has left him with considerable physical disabilities. He can walk but is very stiff on one side and consequently his walking is very jerky. The accident caused him some brain damage. He now has some spatial perception difficulties which result in him frequently having difficulty following directions or finding his way around a new building. He can also have difficulty recognising faces when he does not know someone very well.

In classes Abdul has considerable difficulty with handwriting and particularly with finding his place in a text or starting at the left margin. He had done well at school and this learning is still with him, but he now has a lot of difficulty with his short term memory which makes learning new things particularly hard. Abdul is very aware of the contrast between what he used to be able to do and the difficulties he has now and this can make him easily frustrated and depressed, often feeling that there is not point in trying anything new.

How might you work with Abdul in ways which address both his practical and his psychological needs?

Some ways of working with people with a physical disability:

● The effects of a physical disability vary enormously depending on the particular disability. Make sure you always discuss with an individual what is difficult for them and what helps them.

● Discuss with individuals what is the most comfortable situation for them. They may need seating at a different height; they may need some kind of an arm rest, or thick books under a computer to raise its height; they may only be able to sit still for a certain length of time and need to stand up and move a little at regular intervals.

● Some conditions can make people very tired. Structure learning session to incorporate short breaks if these are required by individuals.

● If individuals have difficulties with handwriting, explore possible solutions with them. Certain simple adaptations, such as a grip around a pen, can make a significant difference. Also look at alternatives to writing by hand and the possibility of using a computer, maybe with a specially adapted keyboard.

● If a person has perceptual difficulties explore with them techniques to compensate for these. These might include providing clear visual guidelines such as a clear line drawn on the left hand margin; a frame or ruler to help identify the line of text; small symbols to indicate left and right.

● In practical sessions explore the possibility of making simple adaptations such as hand rests or frames which will help individuals to carry out manual tasks.

● If an individual has difficulty in remembering ensure you provide instructions in small steps and work with the individual on developing specific techniques, which will aid their memory.

People with speech difficulties

Speech difficulties can have a range of causes. Some people who have a neurological disability such as Cerebral Palsy or Multiple Sclerosis can have difficulty with speaking clearly. People who have been born deaf or partially hearing may have never been able to hear words in a way which has allowed them to learn to speak clearly. There are also people who have no other disability but who find speech difficult and often stammer.

Speech difficulties can result in individuals becoming very isolated as other people become impatient and do not give them the time to communicate properly with them. Speech difficulties can often cause considerable embarrassment to other individuals and to staff, hence they avoid asking questions and entering into dialogue. People also often assume that someone who has a speech difficulty is less intelligent than other people and can patronise them or leave them out of discussions. Consequently the potential of people with speech difficulties has often not been recognised.

People who are close to someone with a speech difficulty have often found ways of understanding their speech. Sometimes a person with a speech difficulty will use someone who knows them well to interpret their speech to others. Other people may choose at times to use hand written notes or a communication board with words and pictures on it.

> ## Case Study
>
> Lorraine has mild Cerebral Palsy which makes it difficult for her to speak clearly and in ways that other people understand. At home her family and a few close friends know her well enough to understand what she says. In prison this is not the case and she has become increasingly isolated. In class she finds any group discussion particularly stressful. She knows that the others are going to have difficulty understanding what she says and so tends not to join in. This makes her frustrated as she also knows that she has a lot to contribute to group discussion.

How might you work both with Lorraine as an individual and with the group as a whole to try to include her in the learning situation?

Some ways of working with people who have a speech difficulty:

● Establish whether individuals with speech difficulties have their own strategies of alternative communication, for example using hand written notes.

● Sometimes one other member of the group can understand a particular individual's speech patterns very well and the person with a speech difficulty might wish to use them when other people find it hard to understand what they are saying. If so make use of this.

● Check your own responses. People often make an automatic assumption that people who have difficulty with speech are less intelligent. Focus on what a person is saying and not how they say it.

● People listening to someone with a speech difficulty often feel embarrassed. Remember this embarrassment is your problem and not theirs and make sure it does not lead to you avoiding asking them questions and leaving them out of discussions.

● Give yourself time to learn an individual's speech patterns.

● Initially ask questions that require short answers, although avoid being patronising by only asking questions that require a yes or no answer.

● When it is difficult to understand a person's answers keep calm and look at their body language and expression as these might help your understanding.

● If you have not understood what someone says then ask them to repeat it. Do not just nod and assume it was not important, but repeat back what you think they have said and confirm understanding.

● Try to avoid guessing or completing peoples' sentences for them, unless they want you to do this to speed communication.

● Accept that learners may find group situations stressful but do not exclude them from groups unless they expressly want this. Allow time for their contributions and follow ground rules to ensure that other learners do not interrupt inappropriately.

● Some people will find it much easier to speak in some situations than others, for example when they are feeling relaxed and are not being put under pressure. People with a stammer sometimes find it much easier to speak on the telephone than in face to face dialogue. Learn from the people you work with what situations are preferable to them.

People with Medical conditions

Some people will have long term or permanent medical conditions that may have an impact on their ability to participate in learning. Many medical conditions may be hidden or unseen. Some medical conditions may cause fatigue and limited stamina. Unseen disabilities include Epilepsy, Diabetes, ME, Hayfever, Haemophilia, Sickle Cell Anaemia, Cystic Fibrosis, HIV, Asthma, heart and other chronic conditions. Many conditions may be stable, others may be variable, and some will be progressive. It is unnecessary to have detailed information about each as the condition may or may not affect a person's ability to study effectively. If you are unsure about a condition or its effect on study, ask the person, who should be able to provide relevant details.

A person may have a medical condition that fluctuates in its severity. They may be stable and in good health for some of the time but stress, some incident or the condition itself, may cause the condition to flare up. Generally, the effects of many medical conditions can vary depending on age, circumstances and often, levels of stress. For many stamina is most affected. This means that labour saving technology and planning an even workload, with the possibility of delayed deadlines, are important. People may need to have time off, and effective support packages will help them to catch up and cope on their return. Some people with degenerative or variable conditions will have changing needs and may need to alter their support arrangements.

Below is some more information about several medical conditions that are both relatively common and often misunderstood.

Epilepsy is a neurological condition defined as a tendency to have recurrent seizures (the term 'seizures' is preferable to fits). Seizures are a symptom of the condition not the cause. Most people can use drugs to control their condition effectively. In some cases, epilepsy is affected by stress.

Some people have brief seizures of five to fifteen seconds known as 'absences'. These may go unnoticed by people nearby, although they may get the impression that the person is day dreaming. It can mean that the person misses several (random) parts of a sentence or talk and could therefore find speech confusing because of inadvertently missing key points.

When a person experiences a major convulsive seizure, he or she will lose consciousness completely. Observers can help by placing a cushion under the head and making sure the person is comfortable after the seizure, preferably putting them in the recovery position until he or she regains consciousness. Never try to restrain the person, or put anything in his or her mouth. In a non-convulsive seizure, there is very little that an observer need do other than guide the person away from danger if he or she is 'wandering' and offer gentle reassurance after the seizure has finished. Many people with epilepsy will only experience seizures during the night and their daytime activity will be unaffected.

Photosensitive epilepsy is a rare form of epilepsy in which seizures are triggered by flashing/flickering lights and certain patterns. A small number of people with photosensitive epilepsy are sensitive to VDU screens and it is possible to obtain screens which do not flicker. Larger VDU screens are usually not appropriate for this group.

Diabetes affects about 2% of the population. People with diabetes do not produce enough of the hormone insulin to control their blood sugar level. This can be treated with diet, exercise and, often, injections, which allow the person to lead a regular active life. Some people may be prone to variations in mood and concentration. In some cases, if the condition is not stable, it can lead to other complications such as visual impairment.

On rare occasions someone with diabetes can suffer from low blood sugar level. The person becomes drowsy and confused and if left can become unconsciousness. If this happens they should immediately eat some sugar or glucose. If they become unconscious, emergency help is needed.

Asthma is an increasingly common condition although it is not always severe enough to affect a person's study. Stress, air quality and even the cold can affect asthmatic conditions. Adequate ventilation is very important.

Migraine is caused by expansion of the blood vessels around the brain. During a migraine inflammation of the tissue surrounding the brain increases the pain. Unlike a headache, migraine disease has many symptoms, including nausea, vomiting, auras (light spots), sensitivity to light and sound, numbness, difficulty in speech, and severe head pain. One migraine attack alone can last for eight hours, several days, or even weeks. Various controllable and uncontrollable triggers may cause migraines. Uncontrollable triggers include weather patterns and menstrual cycles, and controllable triggers include bright light, aspertame*, and alcohol.

Sickle Cell Anaemia Sickle cell 'crises' may occur in any major joint or organ of the body where the blood vessels are finely distributed. In the brain, as well as the more evident strokes that cause partial paralysis, they may cause highly localised little strokes even in pre-adolescent children. These are educationally adverse in two ways: they result in hospitalisation and loss of schooling, and they impair intellectual functioning. While people with impairments of this kind will be very rare in the prison population, the possibility cannot be excluded, especially among prisoners of West African or Caribbean ancestry. People with sickle cell anaemia should be kept warm and be allowed to maintain their fluid intake in the classroom.

Case Study

Winston has epilepsy. It was diagnosed in his late teens and disrupted his studies. The epilepsy was severe and Winston would have fits every few days. Winston was very frightened and felt out of control. In response, as a kind of coping mechanism, to get attention, he started to misbehave in college. In due course he was excluded due to his poor attendance and behaviour when he was in class. He had been learning to drive when his epilepsy developed. His parents, following medical advice, stopped his driving lessons. Winston resented this and took his parent's car keys and went for a joyride. He ran onto the pavement and badly injured several pedestrians. Now at a Young Offender Institution he is keen to pursue his education.

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*   Artificial sweetener found in many soft drinks and processed foods.

How would you explore with Winston what kind of programme of education he would like to undertake?

How would you need to support him in his learning?

Some ways of working with people who have medical conditions:

● Make allowances for the effects of fatigue, caused by the medical condition or medication.

● If possible, allow learners to leave the teaching session if they need to have a rest and especially if they need to take medication.

● Be flexible about erratic attendance or punctuality where this may be due to a medical condition.

● Stress from new situations or pressure may adversely affect some, for example, those with asthma. Anything you can do to make sure people feel at ease and confident is helpful.

● The physical environment will affect some conditions. For example, dust, smoke or dampness may set off an asthma attack. In some cases it may be appropriate to find alternative spaces to work in.

● Some people may wish to record talks if they find notetaking difficult or tiring. It may take a little time to get used to this, but it can be helpful to the person.

● Tests, examinations and assessments can cause additional stress and may put extra strain on those who are easily fatigued.

● Always ask the person how you can best support them in their learning.

Inclusive Approaches to Teaching and Learning

The previous chapter looked at specific disabilities and learning difficulties and ways of working with learners who might experience these difficulties. This chapter will look more generally at teaching and learning and will focus on ways that approaches can be developed to include the full range of learners. It will include sections on:

● Different ways that people learn and suggestions for accommodating these.

● Following the learner's own interests.

● Arranging groups in ways that enable individuals to learn most effectively.

● Individual support.

● Extending the notion of learning outside 'education' sessions.

● Recording work done with learners.

3.1 Different ways of learning

One of the things many learners in prison have in common is that, in the past, they have become disengaged from the process of learning. This is likely to be for a variety of reasons. One reason may well be that they have not been taught in ways that are adapted to how they learn best.

People learn in a variety of different ways and much has been written about individual learning styles. While not delving deeply into any of the many theories about learning styles this section will give a brief outline of some of the major different learning preferences and then look at some ways that teaching might adapt to them.

Some different learning styles

Some learners are very **visual** in the way that they receive information. They tend to prefer pictures or diagrams to written or spoken instructions. They may recognise whole words more easily than breaking them down into a sequence of sounds. They often like to see a whole, intuitive solution rather than breaking something down into logical steps.

Some learners are very **hands on** and practical. They like to touch and manipulate objects and use real, three dimensional resources. They may much prefer using a keyboard to writing.

Some learners are **kinaesthetic**. That is they like to experience things for themselves and be actively engaged in doing things in order to learn rather than talking about them first.

Some learners are **auditory**. They learn through listening and like to talk things through before doing them. They may be more reflective and like to work

things out in stages first. They also often respond well to understanding and applying the rules of learning.

Why identifying learning styles can be important

The categories above depict very broad generalisations and it is important to remember that many learners use all or at least more than one of these approaches. It is important not to jump to conclusions and pigeon–hole learners into a particular category. Nevertheless some learners, and in particular those who may have had difficulties learning at school, may have a marked preference for one type of learning over another. Staff need to talk with learners, ask them questions and give them examples of different ways of learning in order to help them to see how they learn best. When learners begin to see what works best for them they begin to have more control over their learning and become more actively engaged in the process rather than being passive recipients. It is also important for staff to look at their own preferred learning styles as these may be at odds with those of the majority of their students.

> ## Case Study
>
> A member of staff was having particular difficulties with a group of young people she was teaching. At first she was very reluctant to look at their learning styles, feeling that their difficulties were due to behavioural problems rather than any specific learning difficulty. However, she was persuaded to work with them on their learning styles and also looked at her own. She realised that many of her class were very tactile and kinaesthetic learners. They wanted hands on experience and wanted to learn by doing. In contrast she was a very reflective person who liked to work things out logically and sequentially. She realised that there was a definite mismatch between the way in which she was teaching and the way that many of her students learned best. When she changed her teaching style, bringing in more practical activities and allowing more opportunity for direct experience, she found that the class had far fewer behavioural problems.

It is impossible for teachers to adapt all the time to the full range of learning styles. However, what they can do is try to ensure that they are flexible and teach in a variety of ways. Often this means looking at ways that fundamental skills can be approached differently. Traditionally learning in the West has often

been dominated by a rational and logical approach and learners who do not respond well to this have often felt undervalued.

Are there times when you can talk to learners and encourage them to think about how they learn best?

Do you include your own learning preferences in these discussions and notice when they may be very different from certain of the learners you work with?

Kinaesthetic learners

There has been research that shows a high proportion of people who have had difficulty with basic skills and/or behavioural difficulties, are strongly kinaesthetic learners. They do not respond so well to verbal explanations but like to learn by experience. Staff therefore have to find experiential ways of teaching. One very positive example of a practical way of working with a group of prisoners who exhibited extremely challenging behaviour is the Nurture Group set up at Stoke Heath Young Offender Institution.

> ## Case Study
>
> **The Stoke Heath Nurture Group**
>
> The first Nurture Group was set up in November 2001, run by Learning Support teaching staff.
>
> The rationale for the 8-week Nurture Group was:
>
> 'To provide a structured social interaction, wherein individuals could develop positive and progressive social skills and behaviour, guided by specialist staff. These skills should be transferable within this establishment and on release'.
>
> Emphasis is upon praise and reinforcement of positive student behaviour. The key focus is to develop targets, alongside and from the preparation and sharing of breakfast.
>
> The first group involved six students with ADHD, Dyslexia and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. Their behaviour in the Education Department and other areas of the prison was very 'challenging' and many of them spent time in the Separation and Care Unit, Healthcare Department or Anti-Social Behaviour wing. Subsequent groups have involved similar students.

Case Study – continued

The initial meeting is used to outline the purpose of the Nurture Group, with key focus points discussed. Rules are agreed and the setting of weekly targets and other paperwork is explored. The students also agree on their first rota of responsibilities and budget for breakfast. At this stage education and prison staff provide pre-course comments for each student.

The group runs for 8 weeks and meets each Tuesday and Thursday from 8.00 – 9.30 am, using Chapel kitchen facilities.

A 'typical' Nurture Group session would involve the following:

● Agreement of rota of responsibilities.

● Preparation of the breakfast.

● Eating/sharing breakfast around the table.

● Sharing successes achieved.

● Discussion of appropriate strategies.

● Updates of individual session records and setting of new targets.

● Completion of student comment sheets.

● Clearing away and tidying room.

The final week would also involve obtaining student individual evaluations and recapping with the student any changes and progress made. Liaison also occurs with prison and education staff for post-course comments.

Students are permitted to invite 'guests' to breakfast; teaching staff and Chaplains have attended.

Education achievements are closely monitored by Learning Support staff and liaison with other teaching staff indicates if targets are being met in classroom settings. Some group members work towards certificates, including English Speaking Board qualifications. Close liaison between education and learning support staff encourages group members to focus and achieve.

In the short 8 week programme, aims and objectives are achieved and social skills and interaction show a noticeable improvement, particularly between group members. Trust of staff and between group members is much stronger.

In this safe environment group members show an improvement in their self-esteem, confidence and transferable skills that will be invaluable for their futures.

Learners are developing a range of skills, including cooking, decision making, negotiation, following through commitments, social interaction and problem solving. Importantly, they are in a situation where they can learn to trust each other and to value themselves. They are also improving their literacy, numeracy and budget management. However, they are doing this in a completely practical and experiential way. Skills are developed through the experiences of the breakfast activity rather than being taught separately. This particular activity is managed by education staff but could very well also include prison officers who could then use other practical situations to reinforce the skills learnt in these sessions.

Some comments by young people who have been involved in the group include:

> *'The Nurture Group was a good thing because, as a group, we learned to communicate with each other. We worked together as a group and shared manners at the table.'*

> *'The good points was for the group to get to know each other and to get on without any silly behaviour. There was a few occasions when there was silly behaviour but apart from that it was OK. Everybody conformed into doing something like cooking, washing up and setting the table and drinks. I think I was OK. I helped with things that needed doing and the group helped me to get on with the other people and the staff. I think I was a valid member of the group and I recommend it to anybody for the future.'*

> *'The Nurture Group taught me how to cook and calm down by reinforcing good points and asking me to calm down.'*

> *'A good point was the way everyone sometimes came together. It was nice the way the table looked.'*

Are there ways you can develop your own sessions so that learners can develop a range of skills, both social and educational, experientially – if this is the way they learn best?

Visual learners

Research has also shown that learners who have a very markedly visual learning style can often end up excluded from the learning process and can have great difficulty acquiring basic skills. When working with these learners it is important to ensure that you are including methods which suit their learning style, for example:

● Using highlighters or colours.

● Helping learners recognise the shapes of words as well as working through the phonics.

● Encouraging learners to make their own visual representations, such as a mind map where ideas can be represented in one picture rather than written down sequentially.

Visual learners often think holistically or all at once rather than following things through in logical steps. It is therefore important to ensure at the beginning of a lesson that you give them the whole picture of what you are going to do as, if they have to wait for a step by step explanation, they can easily get bored or confused and become disengaged.

> ## Case Study
>
> A member of staff was working with a group of young people on a basic computer study course. He followed a very logical approach working through each class step by step. A particular group of young people seemed constantly bored by his classes and exhibited behaviour which made it very difficult for him to teach. A learning support tutor worked with the class and helped them to look at how they liked to learn best. He found that several of the young people who were exhibiting behavioural difficulties had a very markedly visual approach to learning. He suggested the teacher used more visual strategies such as pictures and diagrams as well as verbal explanation, and also encouraged the teacher to find ways of explaining the whole of what he would be doing at the beginning of each class. When these approaches were used the group of people who had been finding his classes boring and unengaging were able to concentrate far better.

Are you teaching in ways that take account of learners who might have a very strong preference for visual learning?

3.2 Following the learner's own interests

Learners whose disability or learning difficulty has caused them to miss out on many of the basics of learning may feel particularly negative about approaching education. They might well feel that there is nothing in it for them and feel depressed at the thought that they may be asked to do work which appears childish and pointless. The context of what and how they learn is therefore particularly relevant for these learners. It is important to try and find a way into learning by establishing topics of individual interest. Most people who find reading very difficult are able to read at a much higher level in areas having a strong personal interest for them. Finding this point of interest is

not always easy and staff have to be continually creative in finding ways of unostentatiously introducing subjects that might engage an individual's interest.

> ## Case Study
>
> Stanley was a young man who had been born and brought up in England, although his parents had come from Jamaica. He had some literacy skills but still felt very inhibited thinking that he was no good at reading and writing. He seemed very uninterested when attending education sessions. One day his teacher showed the class a video exert from the television series Windrush. For the first time Stanley showed some interest. The teacher followed this up by bringing in some books on Jamaica and casually suggesting that Stanley might like to have a look at them. Gradually Stanley became drawn in to finding out more about the history and politics of Jamaica. In time he became fascinated in researching the country of his origins and found that when he was looking at books on a subject which interested him he was able to read far better than he thought he could. He began to ask his parents to send him details of their early life in Jamaica and is now beginning to write down some of his family's history.

What are some of the steps you might take to give learners the opportunity to focus on a subject which really interests them?

Language experience

Personal writing or 'language experience' can often be a very powerful tool for people who have had difficulty in reading and writing when at school. Often these learners feel that the written word is something that other people produce, which cannot possibly be created by them. When they begin to create their own pieces of writing this perception starts to change. Some learners may wish to write personal accounts; others may find this threatening and prefer to focus on more factual interests, for example a group project on cars or music. When members of a group are carrying out this kind of writing it is important for them not to feel inhibited by making spelling or grammatical mistakes. They may want to dictate much of the piece, or write it onto a computer using a spell check. The important issue at this point is that learners should feel that they have ideas that are worth writing down. Work on correct spelling or grammar can develop later.

Case Study

At Stoke Heath young offenders produce a regular newsletter in which they can celebrate the creative writing they have produced. The idea came from a member of Wing Staff and a multi-disciplinary team of Wing Staff, Education Staff and trainees run the project. Trainees from Y.O. and Juvenile hold posts of editor, sub-editor etc. Articles and poems are submitted and the Newsletter runs competitions and quizzes. At the moment the Newsletter is produced in-house but funding is being applied for to produce it more professionally. Below is an example of the first prize winner of the newsletter poetry competition:

I sit alone in this place
Stressed out head
Down cast face.

I sit alone on my jack
Smoking burn, kicking back.
Kicking back, time goes slow
What week, what month?
Don't care to know!

I just sit and wait,
Wait for my turn,
I'll get on road,
But 'av I learned?

I just don't know,
We'll wait and see
But really what will come of me?
Will I fix up and change my ways
Or will I get out and start to raise?
Raising money to buy some smack,
Robbin' houses to buy some crack.
This wicked circle I'm going round
Back to the station
Sent back down.

The judge will say, 'take him down.
We can't do justice,
Commit to Crown.'

Case Study – continued

Back in jail, I'll phone my mum
'Alright Bab, what's up son?'
'Mum, don't be mad, I'm back in jail.'
The judge says, 'Menace, no chance of bail.'

Down my face I feel a tear,
'Mum, the brief told me, 'Look 6 year''.
'Look 'ere son, I've had enough
We don't want it,
This life is rough.'
After that, no more said,
A heavy sigh, the phone went dead.

So back to routine, in this place
Same old crap, same old face,
Same old day in an' out
Is this what life is all about?

But, really what I'm trying to say
Is if your life runs round this way
Fix it up or change it round
Or else you'll just keep
Goin' down.

So if you don't listen
Or you don't hear
Same place, same time
Just next year.

> ## Case Study
>
> When Tony arrived at Castington Young Offender Institution he had been excluded from school, experienced learning difficulties and was both illiterate and innumerate. Whilst in custody he developed his literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and attended a bricklaying course.
>
> In order to engage him the teacher encouraged him to work on a project that mattered to him and Tony knew what he wanted to do. Using his new ICT and literacy skills he produced a first book for his very young nephew. This book looked professional and because it was a 'first book' Tony was capable of writing it. Tony was incredibly proud of this book and especially so when he won the Puffin Award at the Koestler Awards. After producing this book his motivation and confidence increased.

If your teaching covers basic skills work are there opportunities for learners to write personally about something which is really important to them?

3.3 Group working

Working together as part of a group is a very important aspect of learning. Learners do not just learn from a teacher. Much learning comes from one's peer group. Many of the skills acquired by working in a group, such as listening to others, explaining things to others, sharing experiences, negotiating and understanding others' points of view are very important aspects of learning.

However, some learners, and in particular some of those who have certain behavioural difficulties or emotional difficulties may find group work very hard. This can be true for people who have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder, some people with a mental health difficulty and those people whose emotional and behavioural difficulty has resulted in them feeling extremely vulnerable and insecure.

Staff need to find their own balance in each group they work with between encouraging everyone to participate in group work and respecting their need to have times when they remain outside the group. It is also important to look at the groups you are working with. The balance of a particular group might be wrong for certain members of it and, in these cases, it might be valuable to see if the groups you work with could be rearranged. The previously mentioned Nurture Group is an example of a learning programme established for a

particular group of young people who exhibited very challenging behaviour. The following example is also from Stoke Heath:

Case Study

Early morning gym session for vulnerable prisoners

The need for such a facility arose when a student, who was repeatedly receiving Governor's reports for non-attendance of gym session, was visited by a Principal Officer.

During their discussion it became evident that the trainee wanted to attend gym sessions but was afraid of the environment in the shower rooms.

Once this had been highlighted to the Principal Officer he recognised the need to offer small group sessions to 'vulnerable' trainees, where they could participate in gym sessions within a safe environment.

This valuable facility now operates 4-5 mornings per week from 7.45 – 8.45 am, allowing trainees to return to their wings and participate in the prison regime.

An improvement can be seen not only in the personal fitness levels of trainees but also in raised self-esteem and general interaction within groups. This occurs not only during gym sessions but throughout other areas of prison life.

Case Study

In one establishment learners joined a course based around producing a health education video. They were learners who did not respond to classroom based learning, but were motivated by the task in hand. As long as their literacy, numeracy and ICT were geared to their project they were happy to engage in the subjects and developed their skills through a process which the staff called 'learning by stealth'. At the end of the course the learners had gained qualifications in Literacy, Numeracy, Drama, ICT and Lifeskills – and they had produced a video.

This course suited active learners, who worked well with others and who required non-traditional modes of delivery.

Do you have any control over choosing who works in a particular group?

Are there ways you might want to rearrange groups so that all learners have equal opportunities to learn?

3.4 Individual Work

There are many cases when a person's learning can significantly benefit from some periods of individual support. This can provide them with a safe environment in which they can explore their difficulties and develop strategies for learning. Staff in the Learning Support Department at Stoke Heath have devised a way of enabling certain young people to have some individual learning sessions.

Case Study

The Learning Support Department at Stoke Heath has five teachers and one Learning Support Co-ordinator.

Staff work on a 1:1 basis with students. Each student has a 1 hour appointment in their chosen area of work, in either literacy or numeracy. Students with behaviour, emotional or intellectual differences are also encouraged to address areas of need and develop coping strategies. Through discussion barriers to learning are removed and learning can occur in a safe environment.

Students are referred to Learning Support in various ways. They can self-refer or be referred by members of the teaching or prison staff. Low scores from education inductions can be another route.

An initial assessment by means of a comprehensive interview is made when students first attend Learning Support. This is to determine areas of need and where focus is most urgently required. Short and long term goals are set by the Learning Support tutors in conjunction with the students.

We can also detect whether students show signs of dyslexia or have other educational or emotional needs. This information is taken into account when an individual programme is developed.

A Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire is also completed.

> ## **Case Study** – continued
>
> To monitor learning, bi-monthly reviews are carried out. This enables teachers to assess the past and look to the future needs of the students and so that the Learning Support Co-ordinator can monitor and evaluate standards.
>
> Exit interviews are carried out with students to ascertain whether they felt more confident with their literacy and numeracy skills. Personal comments are also welcomed to monitor and maintain high standards within the Learning Support Department.
>
> Liaison is made where appropriate both with other education staff and with prison staff. When a student is coming up to release liaison is made with appropriate external agencies.
>
> The Learning Support Department also provides a 'chill out' facility to enable students with behavioural difficulties to calm down and return to lessons.

Are there ways in which your work can be organised so that there is some time for 1 to 1 sessions?

3.5 Learning happens everywhere, not just in the classroom

Learning does not just take place in an educational class and helping people to learn is not simply the prerogative of teachers. It is clear that learning, for young people or adults, is always enhanced if it is encouraged and reinforced by people other than teachers. This is particularly true for people with some kind of disability or learning difficulty, who might feel very insecure about their ability to learn and especially need encouragement. It is also important when a particular member of staff, whether a prison officer or a teacher, finds a particularly good way of working with an individual, that with their consent, this way of working is shared. Examples might include, a way of understanding the speech of someone who has a speech difficulty, or a way of communicating with a person who has an Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Such inter-disciplinary working is not always easy. Staff may have very different cultures and each of them can feel dismissive of the ways in which the other works. There may be problems of ownership in which each agency feels that it is the one who should be leading in deciding the best approach. There may be concerns about confidentiality and how much information should be shared.

There might also, on a very practical level, never be any structured time in which different staff can exchange ideas.

Time to liaise

It is not easy, with the day to day responsibilities that all staff have, to create time for sharing ideas and information. However, this is essential if a holistic approach is to be achieved and prison officers and education staff are to develop ways of working together in order to help fulfil the goals of a particular prisoner. Time for sharing can happen in a variety of different ways.

The Nurture Group described in an earlier section allowed prisoners to invite guests to a breakfast thus allowing other staff to see the way in which the session worked and to see prisoners working in a very different environment.

The Learning Support tutors should maintain contact with all staff working with the young person. This will not only include staff within the Young Offender Institution, but also external agencies such as the Youth Offending teams, Social Services and Connexions. They muster ensure continuity of their approach both while the young person is at the institution and when they are released.

As well as being able to discuss the progress of individuals it is also very valuable if education and prison staff can have some joint meetings where they can describe the ways in which they each work, discuss differences of approach and work towards achieving shared values and goals.

Confidentiality

It is essential that individual prisoners should feel secure, that they can choose to have certain facts kept confidential. Sensitive, personal information should not be shared without the expressed consent of an individual. However, the issue of confidentiality can be used as an excuse that can block sharing of information between agencies. It is important to be clear what information needs to be shared and what does not. For example, it is possible to share effective ways of working with a particular prisoner without divulging personal information about them. Institutions might wish to devise confidentiality policies making clear what should and should not be shared and how to ensure that prisoners have the opportunity to agree on what information should be passed on.

Joint training

Opportunities to attend joint training can be a very effective way of allowing staff from different agencies to work together. This might take the form of all staff attending a training session that has particular relevance to both officers and teachers. It might involve the two different groups organising a training session for each other in which they can explain the ways that they work and the outcomes they are trying to achieve.

Joint evaluation of prisoners' achievements

Another positive way of bringing different staff and different aspects of a prisoner's activities together can be through joint evaluation of an individual's progress. This has been done very effectively by ASDAN as described below.

Case Study

ASDAN is an awarding body recognised by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. To gain an ASDAN award learners do not need to take an exam. Instead they build up a portfolio of work they have done, which is then assessed by an external moderator. The work assessed does not just cover formal skills – such as reading and writing or vocational training – but also life skills such as reasoning, working with others and personal self-development.

Currently ASDAN programmes are being run in prisons, Young Offender Institutions, secure units and probation services:

HMP Kirkham
HMYOI Thorn Cross
Camberwell Probation Centre
Vinney Green Secure Unit
HMP and YOI Ashfield
Northampton Probation Services
National Probation Services (Merseyside)

The profile of ASDAN learners varies slightly from institution to institution but in the main they are young people, often on short term sentences. Many of them have been unemployed since leaving school and the majority have a very low level of basic skills.

Case Study – continued

The particular way in which an ASDAN programme is run varies from one institution to another but one major feature is that it covers the full range of what the young person is doing in education, in training workshops and in Youth Work. Most of the young people on the ASDAN programmes have never received any kind of certificate and the opportunity to achieve this kind of recognition is very important for their self-esteem. On attaining a first award many of the young people feel confident enough to progress to the next step. For example, in HMYOI Thorn Cross, ASDAN has been running for 20 months; 75 young men have achieved the Bronze Level and 60% of these have shown an interest in continuing to the Silver award. There is also evidence that those who leave Thorn Cross with an award feel better able to take up further education or employment when they are released.

Profile of a Learner doing an ASDAN award

Lee, aged 23, was the youngest man in the group. He had a 99% OGRS* score, having appeared in court on 22 separate occasions for a total of 54 offences. He had found it difficult to stay out of trouble in the past and had a tendency to be impulsive and rarely considered the consequences before acting. He was immature and needed plenty of encouragement to maintain attendance and make appropriate contributions during sessions. Although he was one of the more challenging group members, his behaviour remained within the bounds of acceptability. He found the programme demanding but with encouragement from staff and the other group members, managed to complete all the components successfully – including obtaining the ASDAN Foundation Training Award, which represents his first academic achievement.

Are there times in your institution when education staff and prison staff can meet together to discuss shared issues and create programmes for individuals, covering all aspects of their life at prison?

Are there ways in which this communication between agencies could be improved?

Are there opportunities for joint accreditation of prisoners' achievements?

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* Offender Group Reconviction Scale.

3.6 Record Keeping

Keeping clear and simple records of the progress an individual student has made is essential when working with students who have a disability or a learning difficulty. Far too often, valuable information is lost and when an individual moves to another institution or is released and may want to attend classes outside prison, staff are having to start again at the beginning in assessing their learning needs.

Record keeping needs to include:

● What a student has done and the achievements they have made.

● The particular interests of a student.

● How they like to learn and whether they have a particular learning style.

● Any specific difficulties they may have with learning and strategies for overcoming these, for example, if they require large print; if they can read best on a particular colour; if they respond best to short chunks of work with frequent breaks or if they prefer to work in a more sustained way.

Record keeping should be a shared exercise with the student and not something done apart from them and kept separate from them. If a student is going to change tutors, to move to another institution, or to be released, it is very important to ensure that this record really does get passed on to the relevant next person.

Do you make time to ensure that clear records are kept in conjunction with the individual student?

Assessment and Diagnosis

Stage 1

Most prisoners and young offenders come into establishments having had their needs assessed previously either in the community or in another prison/YOI – or all three! Hence it is important to examine individual records for information concerning learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Where appropriate follow this up with phone calls to the previous school, college or education department, after discussing this with the learner. Staff should also examine OASys (18 yrs plus) and ASSET (15-17 yrs) records for vital information.

Stage 2

Most establishments have an induction programme. Initial assessment of learning and skills needs should play an important part in this process.

A member of the Education Department should conduct an initial interview with all new arrivals to establish individual need, interests and preferred learning styles. Staff from other disciplines may also become aware of a prisoner's learning difficulties and/or disabilities during induction interviews/sessions.
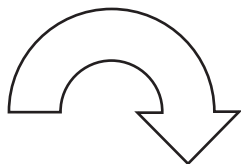
In order to discover the literacy and numeracy levels at which learners are functioning they should sit Initial Basic Skills Assessment Tests. During the initial interview it will have become clear that some could not participate in such tests. They should not be asked to do so. This is why it is very important that interviews should be carried out before testing. Often in establishments, for logistical reasons, this does not happen. Asking a learner who is functioning at a very low level to sit a test can result in behaviour problems, an ensuing disciplinary situation, humiliation of the learner and a further disengagement from the learning process.

● **If a learner sits an assessment, it is vital that they have the results fed back to them.**

● **It is vital that all teaching staff have access to test results, non confidential information gathered from interviews and individual learning plans.**
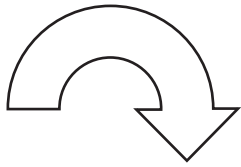
Pre- Entry Diagnostic Assessment (see Diagnostic Assessment Materials – Appendix B). These should be carried out with learners, by trained teachers where initial interviews, assessment or the concerns of a teacher or other member of staff indicate that it is desirable.
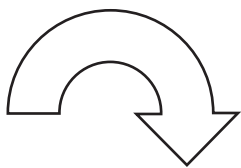
And/or Dyslexia Support Materials (see Diagnostic Assessment Materials – Appendix B).

Referral to Educational Psychologist or other appropriate specialists.

Occasionally this will be necessary. SENCOs* and teachers will often be able to draw up an Individual Learning Plan with appropriate learning styles and approaches without specialist referral, but where a learner needs special support during an exam or has very severe difficulties a further referral might be necessary.

● **Teachers continuously assess and review the needs of their students. This is formative assessment. Summative assessment will take place when students are assessed for external certification.**

● **If you think that someone has a learning difficulty or disability it is important to record it and alert other professionals who will be working with them. The Education Manger will ensure that the appropriate assessments of need are carried out, either in-house or externally.**

* Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator.

Resources and Disability Organisations

The following section lists some organisations, websites and publications which might be useful resources to refer to when working with students with disabilities or learning difficulties.

Basic Skills

The Basic Skills Inclusive Learning Consortium has produced a series of publications to support learners with disabilities and learning difficulties in accessing the Skills for Life basic skills curriculum. These include:

Adult Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework for Literacy and Numeracy

and

Access for All – guidance on making the adult literacy and numeracy core curriculum accessible

Both of these documents support staff wishing to ensure the accessibility of the basic skills curriculum to the full range of learners. Although they both deal specifically with the basic skills curriculum, the information in them is relevant to staff working with learners with disabilities and learning difficulties across a much wider curriculum framework.

Both are available from the Basic Skills Agency:
www.basic-skills.co.uk,
Basic Skills Agency Publications – Commonwealth House,
1–19 New Oxford Street,
London, WC1A 1NU
Tel: 0870 600 2400
Email: basicskills@twoten.press.net

Other publications which have been produced as a result of the Basic Skills Initiative include:

Living our Lives – 10 readers by learners for learners

(life stories of people with learning difficulties)

Self Advocacy Action Pack

(for people with learning difficulties)

Yesterday I never stopped writing

Guidance on developing community based skills for people with a disability or learning difficulty

Skills Explorer

CD ROM of practical activities for BSL (British Sign Language) users at
Entry Level

Skills Explorer

CD ROM of practical literacy and numeracy activities for learners at Entry Level

Resource Pack for staff teaching basic Skills to adults with learning difficulties and disabilities

A staff development pack with a generic introduction and specialist sections

Disability Organisations

Many of the resources produced to support the access of disabled people in adult and further education are produced by specific disability or educational organisations. The best way of finding out about materials available is to look at the organisation's website.

ADDnet UK (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder): (www.btinternet.com/~black.ice/addnet/)

This site is mainly aimed at parents of children with ADHD, to enable them to contact local groups and obtain support. It does provide general information and has a links section that covers international contacts. It should therefore be a useful resource for those who wish to understand this condition and its impact.

There is a list of local groups with their contact details.

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) (www.rnib.org.uk)

The RNIB produces a huge range of resource materials. It runs a telephone information service and supports this by a range of fact sheets.

Publications which might be particularly relevant for those working with students who are blind or partially sighted include:

Breaking Down Barriers: accessing further and higher education for visually impaired students.

Lifelong learning – the summary of a report that looks at improving opportunities for people with sight problems

Listening to students – older blind and partially sighted peoples' experiences and assessment of adult education

The RNIB also has a wealth of experience in the use of technology for blind and visually impaired people. Relevant publications include:

Accessing technology – using technology to support learning and employment opportunities for visually impaired learners

RNIB also produce four leaflets on technology covering the areas of:

Braille production
Computer basics fact sheet
Scanners
Screen readers

They have also produced a tutorial series for people with sight problems which includes:

Listening to the Internet
Listening to Windows 98
Listening to Word

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) (www.rnid.org.uk)

The RNID runs a telelphone/teletext helpline and also produces information leaflets and fact sheets. Its most recent publication on post school education is **Deaf Students in Further Education**. This is a very comprehensible and clear account of what deaf learners might need when studying at college and has areas of relevance for those working with deaf learners in prisons. It covers:

- assessment.

- the role of specialist staff.

- modification of learning materials.

- physical environment.

- technical support.

- staff development and deaf awareness training.

- personal issues/counselling.

British Deaf Association (www.britishdeafassociation.org.uk)

This is an organisation of deaf people which provides information on its website that would be helpful for any member of staff working with deaf learners.

Contact: 1-3 Worship Street, London EC2A 2AB
Tel: 020 7588 3520
Fax: 020 7588 3527
Text Phone: 020 7588 3529,
Video Phone: 020 7496 9539
E-mail: helpline@bda.org.uk

The Mental Health Foundation and Foundation for people with learning difficulties (www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

The **Mental Health Foundation** produces many publications on mental health. It also produces a newsletter, monthly updates and factsheets. It has recently expanded to include the **Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities**, which has its own website (www.learningdisabilities.org.uk). The foundation runs two web based fora – *The Choice Forum*, which brings together staff in a range of agencies who work with people with learning difficulties and *The Policy Forum*, which brings together anyone working in a policy capacity. The foundation places regular articles on *The Policy Forum* dealing with recent policy changes. *The Choice Forum* is a very active network on which people can exchange ideas and information. While primarily addressing the needs of staff in health and social services, both of these fora might well be useful sources of advice for people working in adult or further education.

(MIND) The Mental Health Charity (www.mind.org.uk)

Mind is a mental health charity in England and Wales, but does not cover Scotland. Their focus is mainly on mental health problems rather than learning difficulties. Their aim is to advance the views, needs and ambitions of people with experience of mental distress, promote inclusion by challenging discrimination, influence policy through campaigning and education, inspire the development of quality services, which reflect expressed need and diversity and to achieve equal civil and legal rights through campaigning and education. Factsheets can be downloaded from their website on issues such as mental health problems and learning disabilities, by visiting the search page.

Contact: Mind, 15 -19 Broadway,
London E15 4BQ
Tel: 020 8519 2122
Fax: 020 8522 1725
Email: contact@mind.org.uk
Information helpline: Mindinfoline@mind.org.uk

National Autistic Society (www.nas.org.uk)

The National Autistic Society supports families of autistic children and adults but also helps other professionals working with autistic people. The complexity and variety of the condition is not widely understood and their website provides an enormous amount of information ranging from introductory information to links to research sites. This is an extremely valuable resource for education professionals.

Contact: 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG.
Tel: 020 7833 2299
Fax: 020 7833 9666
E-mail: nas@nas.org.uk

Epilepsy Action (www.epilepsy.org.uk)

Epilepsy Action is the new name for the main national association working with epileptic individuals and their families. They have developed a large web site that includes basic information about the condition that will be generally useful to college and centre staff. The site also provides an index of reference material for those who wish to develop a more detailed understanding of epilepsy.

Contact: Epilepsy Action, New Anstey House, Gate Way Drive, Yeadon, Leeds LS19 7XY.
Tel: 0113 210 8800
Fax: 0113 391 0300
E-mail: epilepsy@epilepsy.org.uk

Dyslexia organisations

British Dyslexia Organisation (www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk)

The BDA is a membership organisation for dyslexic people. It offers advice, information and help to families, professionals and dyslexic individuals. It works to raise awareness and understanding of dyslexia, and to effect change. BDA provides a range of useful resources related to dyslexia.

Contact: The British Dyslexia Association, 98 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU.
Tel: 0118 966 2677
Fax: 0118 935 1927
Helpline: 0118 966 8271 Monday to Friday,10.00am-12.45pm and 2.00-4.45pm
E-mail: info@dyslexiahelp-bda.demon.co.uk

Adult Dyslexia Organisation (www.futurenet.co.uk/charity/ado/adomenu/adomenu.htm)

The ADO is an organisation of dyslexic adults. It provides support for dyslexic adults and resources for those working with dyslexic adults.

Contact: Admin: 0207-737-7646, Helpline: 0207-924-9559,
Fax: 0207-207-7796
E-mail: dyslexia.hq@dial.pipex.com

The Dyslexia Institute (www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk/)

The Dyslexia Institute (DI) is a charity that specialises in the assessment and teaching of people with dyslexia and is now the only national dyslexia teaching organisation in the world. It seeks ways to improve the effectiveness of teaching and also focuses on the development of teaching materials.

Contact: 133 Gresham Road,
Staines, Middlesex, TW18, 2AJ
Tel: 01784 463 851or Fax: 01784 460 747.

The London Languages and Literacy Unit (LLLU) (www.sbu.ac.uk/LLLU/)

LLLU aims to help organisations improve the quality of education and training by pioneering and disseminating innovative approaches and good practice, so that individuals with a wide range of language and learning needs can achieve success. They publish useful documents including **'Supporting Dyslexic Students in Further Education, Guidelines for Best Practice'** available from Avanti Press. It specifically sets out to provide a framework that will enable colleges to meet the requirements of DDA Part 4 in relation to dyslexic students. It covers the student's experience from pre-entry to progression from the course and also the necessary managerial and administrative framework, which needs to be in place. Although written primarily for those working in colleges, much of the basic information in this publication is also relevant to those working in prisons.

Contact: The London Languages and Literacy Unit, South Bank University, 103 Borough Road, London SE1 0AA.
Tel: 020 7815 6290
Fax: 020 7815 6296
E-mail: lllu@sbu.ac.uk

Other useful publications on supporting dyslexic students in post school education include:

Demystifying Dyslexia: Raising Awareness and developing Support for Dyslexic Young People and Adults by Cynthia Klein and Marysia Krupska, (LLLU, 1995). This includes much practical information and staff development materials.

Maths for the Dyslexic: A Practical Guide by A. Henderson, (David Fulton, 1998). This gives useful examples of the particular difficulties those with dyslexia can have with maths, as well as suggestions for alternative ways of presenting information.

There is also a video **'On Being Dyslexic: Adults Talking About Dyslexia'** (LLLU, available from Avanti) which gives powerful images of dyslexic adults talking about what helps them and what they need to learn and could be a useful tool in staff development activities.

Education organisations

NIACE, the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (www.niace.org.uk)

NIACE is the leading national organisation for adult education. Its work includes policy development, research and the creation of resources. It produces a monthly journal **Adults Learning**. NIACE has a regular team of staff working on issues related to disability and learning difficulty. One publication likely to be of specific relevance to those working with adults with mental health difficulties is:

> **Images of Possibility: Creating Learning Opportunities for Adults with Mental Health Difficulties**, Alison Wertheimer, 1997. This book looks at key features and innovative practice in LEA and college provision.

Skill, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (www.skill.org.uk)

Skill is the only organisation that works specifically to further the interests of disabled learners in post-school education. It covers the areas of policy development, research and information.

Skill runs an information service, produces regularly updated information leaflets, and also produces a regular journal and newsletter.

One Skill publication relevant to people working with students with mental health difficulties is:

> **Students with Mental Health Difficulties: Your Questions Answered.** This gives an overview of the specific issues related to working with learners with mental health difficulties in a further education context.

Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) (www.lsda.org.uk/home.asp)

The Learning and Skills Development Agency is a strategic national resource for the development of policy and practice in post-16 education and training. The Agency was previously known as the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA). It produces a wealth of publications, many of which can be downloaded from the LSDA website.

Relevant publications include:

> **'Ain't Misbehavin'** by Lance Haward, Carole Mitchell, Douglas Pride and Brenda Pride (1998). This publication aims to help colleges manage and include students who exhibit disruptive behaviour, so that their learning experiences are successful.

> **Strategies for Teaching That Match Individual Learning Styles**,
> co-ordinated by Jane Bedlington, Milton Keynes College.
>
> **Equality and Diversity in Adult and Community Learning**,
> Anna Reisenberger and Stella Dadzie, (LSDA, London, 2002);
>
> **Listening to Learners**, Mark Ravenhall, (LSDA, London, 2002);
>
> **Observation of Teaching and Learning in Adult Education**,
> David Ewen, (LSDA, London, 2002).

Technical support

Access for disabled learners is increasingly being enhanced by the development of technical support. Two organisations supporting staff in finding out about different levels of technical support available are:

Techdis (www.techdis.ac.uk)

Techdis is a Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) funded service, supporting the further and higher education communities in all aspects of technology and disability and/or learning difficulty support. It can give advice on new and emerging technology in the field of learning and teaching.

E-mail help desk: helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk

Abilitynet (www.abilitynet.org.uk)

Abilitynet is a charity that brings the benefits of computer technology to adults and children with a disability. It gives free information and advice on any aspect of the use of a computer by someone with a disability.

Other publications

Inclusive Learning, the report of the learning difficulty and/or disability committee chaired by Professor Tomlinson (FEFC 1996). This publication shifted the whole emphasis of how inclusion of students with disabilities and learning difficulties needed to be viewed and looks at how inclusive learning requires the participation and commitment of the whole organisation, not just a few dedicated staff.

An introduction to classroom observation. Ted Wragg, 2nd edition (Falmer, Routledge 1999) provides a good introductory text with practical ideas about how to observe and learn from students.

Training and Staff Development

A Suitably Qualified Co-ordinator

It is expected that all establishments will have at least one member of the Education Department who as part of their teaching qualification – or through a postgraduate qualification – received in-depth training in supporting the needs of learners with Learning Difficulties and or Disabilities. In Young Offender Institutions caring for 15 to 17 year olds, these teachers will be known as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators.

Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL

It is expected that all **teachers of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL** will in future possess qualifications approved as incorporating the subject specifications for teachers of Adult Literacy and Numeracy, as developed by FENTO (the Further Education National Training Organisation). These qualifications are set at levels 3 and 4 of the National Qualifications Framework and as well as being used as part of post-16 teacher training, they will also be used as a key element in Continuous Professional Development (Level 3 in generic post-16 teacher training and Level 4 in specialist teacher training). These specifications deal with social and learning issues, including the learning difficulties and disorders that challenge some learners.

At present the 'Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework' and the 'Access for All Guidance' document (see the 'Resources' section), training is being delivered by NIACE. As from April 2003 this training will be offered as modules of a national framework for Continuous Professional Development.

There is also a new qualification at Level 2 for those who wish to support learners of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL. Whilst participating in these courses students will look at how to support the needs of learners with learning diificulties and/or disabilities.

Wider Training

When establishments or contractors wish to provide staff development specific to understanding and actively supporting the needs of those with learning difficulties and or disabilities, they can also call upon specialist organisations, colleges and universities to provide awareness training and specialist skills training, such as British Sign Language. Many establishments will wish to ensure that a number of staff are trained in supporting learners with Dyslexia.

The Way Ahead

● Establishments should draw up an 'Inclusive Learning Policy' and accompanying action plan in which they demonstrate their commitment to meet the individual learning and skills requirements of all prisoners/trainees.

● Establishment staff should be made aware of this handbook and its location during the part of their induction where they meet with the Education Manager. They are also given a flyer promoting the handbook and its use.

● Education Departments employ a trained member of staff who can take the lead on supporting those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (as specified in the current education contract).

● All teachers and instructors attend training to enable them to support the special needs of learners within the learning environment.

● New prisoners receive a thorough assessment of their needs on arrival at establishments and negotiate an individual learning plan. On certain occasions it may be necessary to refer someone to an educational psychologist or other professional for a more in-depth assessment of need.

● Establishments work towards increasing the numbers of staff who can communicate through British Sign Language.

Conclusion

This handbook has looked at the particular needs of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. It has attempted to show how these learners, along with all others, have a right to follow the learning that is most appropriate to them. Education systems in prisons should be designed so that they take account of the wide range of differences that people bring to their learning and accommodate the needs of all learners, whatever their particular differences are.

These principles are aptly summarised in HMYOI Stoke Heath's Special Educational Needs Learning Policy:

● **Every student has an entitlement to personal, social and intellectual development and should be given an opportunity to achieve his potential in learning.**

● **Every student is unique in terms of characteristics, interests, abilities, motivation and learning needs.**

● **Educational systems should be designed to take into account these wide diversities, so that the special educational needs of the majority of our students can be normally met within the usual curriculum.**

- **Those with exceptional learning needs and/or disabilities should have access to high quality and appropriate education.**

Delivering Skills for Life – Diagnostic Assessment Materials

Delivering Skills for Life – Diagnostic Assessment Materials

Background

As part of the Skills for Life strategy, the DfES Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit commissioned the development, design and production of diagnostic assessment materials that were required to cover the range of levels from pre-entry to Level Two and correlate to the standards, the pre-entry curriculum framework and the ESOL and core curricula documents. The work has been undertaken by a consortium led by the Basic Skills Agency in partnership with National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and Be Consultancy.

Purpose

The assessment materials are designed for use by practitioners working with adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners and consideration has to be given to the variety of settings ranging where assessment will take place.

The new diagnostic assessment materials are designed to be used as part of the range of assessment processes described in *Delivering Skills for Life*[1] (2002). Diagnostic assessment should be:

● administered by a specialist teacher.

● used *after* initial assessment has taken place.

used as the basis for drawing up a detailed profile of the learner to inform negotiation of the individual learning plan (ILP), as a continuous part of the learning programme.

Pre-entry Materials

The materials take an inclusive approach to the pre-entry work and the materials will be presented in a common format with the rest of the diagnostic assessment suite. At the earlier milestones, where the curriculum framework is less specific, this will consist of advice and guidance, details about assessment opportunities, methods of recording assessments, resource information and references. At the later milestones, there will be some assessment materials for use if required, along with the guidance and recording format. There will also be information on naturally occurring assessment opportunities and conceptual alternatives.

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1   Available free from Prolog, tel 0845 602 2260

Dyslexia Support Materials

These materials do **not** provide a full diagnosis of dyslexia, but instead draw on the guidance in the curriculum manual *Access for All* [2] (DfES 2002) and investigate those aspects of the adult literacy standards and curriculum where a person with dyslexia might encounter difficulties.

Some learners may present themselves at the interview or initial assessment stage with a previous assessment for dyslexia, in which case a practitioner would directly draw upon assessment items from this set of materials. However, there may also be situations in which a teacher judges, as a result of initial assessment or formative assessment during the learning programme, that the learner appears to demonstrate potential indicators for dyslexia. In this case, the phonological module would be used to determine whether assessment using the dyslexia support materials is more appropriate. This module consists of a tutor mediated oral assessment which takes ten to fifteen minutes. The materials will also contain guidance concerning appropriate referrals for full dyslexia assessment.

CD ROM version

The ICT version will be available on a CD ROM to maximise access, because many organisations presently have difficulty accessing materials via the internet. It will allow for installation on a single laptop for use in community provision, or can be loaded onto a Local Area Network for use within a managed learning environment and accessed by all the assessors. In all settings, the assessor will have the same administration facilities available. This will ensure that assessors are able to use the materials in all learning environments, whether high or low tech. Each paper-based item has a mirror item on the ICT version and speaking and listening items on the CD ROM will also be available on audio tape.

Assessment can be set up by group list or by individual learner. As with the paper-based items, the assessor can select from the full range of units at subject level or refine the selection to curriculum element level, in order to construct a tailored assessment for each learner. The assessor will manage the assessment selection, construction, administration and feedback of the diagnostic profile in discussion with the learner.

2   Available free from BSA, tel 0870 600 2400