Definitions of learning disability / learning difficulty / SEN

Special educational needs (SEN)

Learning disability

EHC plans

1,276,215 children and young people (CYP) with specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, which do not have a significant general impairment of intelligence, and learning disability. People will also use ‘learning difficulties’ to indicate a general impairment of the intelligence.

Over 400k CYP with a reduced intellectual ability leading to difficulty understanding new / complex information; learning skills; and coping with everyday activities. An impairment that started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development.

A child has a learning difficulty or disability if they have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or has a disability which prevents / hinders them from making use of facilities provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or post-16 institutions (which often use the term learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD)).

319,819 CYP who have special educational needs, for whom the local authority considers it is necessary to have provision made in accordance with an EHC plan, or Statement.

4,232 CYP with statements / EHC plans in residential special schools or colleges

240 -65 CYP with learning disability, autism or both who are inpatients; 69% ASC and no learning disability

41,547 CYP with learning disabilities estimated to have behaviours that challenge (Sept 2014 Emerson et al)

204 children accommodated in secure children’s homes (2018 figure)