

If you think a parent has a learning disability.....



Before you start, remember...

- Learning disability doesn't make someone a bad parent
- You need time - learning disability doesn't mean someone can't understand or learn ... but explanation may be harder and learning will take longer
- Learning disability may not be that important to the assessment of parenting – other factors may be much more significant, such as poverty, social isolation or stress
- Do as you would for any family: focus on the key things that really matter for the child
- Ask yourself – what's life like for this family?
- Early intervention improves outcomes
- Parents with learning disabilities may need ongoing support throughout the child's childhood

When working with a parent ...

- Take time to build trust – remember the parent may have had bad experiences before and may be reluctant to talk about problems. They may be worried about having their children removed
- Clear Communication is key:
 - Listen– to the parent and take time to understand how they communicate
 - Keep it simple - ordinary words, no ambiguity or jargon
 - Big – write everything in at least point 14 type
 - Write – a note of any advice or next meeting (even when the person can't read they will most likely ask someone they trust to read it for them)
 - Don't assume – that parents have understood what you have said
- Don't overwhelm: don't give too much information all at once
- Break down complex tasks or information into simpler parts

When working with a parent ...

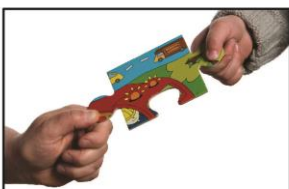
- Teach parents skills in their own home where possible. If learning has to take place away from home, relate it specifically to their own experience, and reinforce it at their home if possible. Regular reinforcement is important
- Prepare them as much as possible for important meetings - case conferences and reviews; children's hearings - and try to ensure they have someone of their choice to accompany and support them.
- Give out a copy of the easy read Good Practice Guidelines – go through relevant bits of it explaining who does what and what will happen next*
- Consider whether the parents might need legal advice – SCLD have a list of solicitors who know about learning disability

Involving others

- Make sure you know about local services which can help you and the parent
- Share information with colleagues who may have a different view or other skills
- Liaise with adult workers and health colleagues about the parent's learning disability.
- Suggest independent advocacy. This will be a help to you as well as the parent as you will get a better understanding of the parent's view

* You can access the Scottish Good Practice Guidelines for Supporting Parents With a Learning Disability - <http://www.sclد.org.uk/sclد-projects/working-with-parents/parenting-guidelines>
Guidelines (Easy read) at - <http://www.sclد.org.uk/sclد-projects/working-with-parents/parenting-guidelines>

This resource was produced by the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability and the Working Together With Parents Network



Working Together With Parents Network

Supporting professionals working with parents with learning difficulties

