# Proposed Definitions for Ministry of Justice PEF Contract Schedules

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## Learning Disabilities

The Government definition of learning disabilities relates to people with the following characteristics[1]:

- A significantly reduced ability to understand complex information or learn new skills ('impaired intelligence')
- A reduced ability to cope independently ('impaired social functioning')
- A condition which started before adulthood and has a lasting effect.

Most people with learning disabilities experience difficulties in communicating, requiring longer to process information and to respond to questions. They may fail to understand social cues and struggle to recall information. They can also be suggestible to the influence of others.

In addition to those adult prisoners who meet the criteria for learning disabilities, there is a much larger number with 'borderline' learning disabilities, classed as 'learning disabled'. This group is also likely to require support with communication and some daily living tasks.

## Specific Learning Difficulties *(referred to in these Schedules and Framework Specification as 'learning difficulties')*

'Specific learning difficulties' is an umbrella term covering a number of conditions in which *specific* areas of functioning are affected and there is no correlation with overall intelligence. This family of conditions affect the way skills are acquired and how information is processed. They are also characterised by poor short-term memory and weak organisational skills.

The most common of these specific learning difficulties are dyslexia, dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dyscalculia. They often co-occur[2] . ADHD is also associated with the development of conduct disorders, illicit drug use and peer delinquency, which in turn may increase the risk of offending. [3]

Undiagnosed specific learning difficulties, and/or a lack of appropriate support and intervention in childhood, often lead to negative associations with education and general disengagement from learning and training.

## Learning Difficulties

This term is used differently by health, social care and education services as well as by the individuals affected. It is important to ascertain whether someone claiming to have a learning difficulty actually has a learning disability, shows signs of an Autistic Spectrum Condition or has a *specific* learning difficulty.

Challenging behaviour may initially mask a person's learning disability or (specific) learning difficulty.



[1] *Valuing People* White Paper (Department of Health, 2001)

[2] *Releasing Potential of Offenders with Dyslexia;* Jameson (2014)

[3] *Nobody made the Connection: The prevalence of Neurodisability in young people who offend.* The Children's Commissioner (2012)