

Feeling Down

Improving the mental health
of people with learning disabilities



foundation for
people with
learning disabilities

About FPLD

About us

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities is a charity.

We work with:



- people with learning disabilities,
- families,
- carers,
- local authorities and
- service providers

to help make things better for people with learning disabilities.

Definition

- In Valuing People (2001) they describe a 'learning disability' as a: significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills. reduced ability to cope independently which starts before adulthood with lasting effects on development.

What we will talk to you about today

- Look at the prevalence of mental health for people with learning disabilities.
- our project which is called
‘Feeling Down – Looking after the Mental Health of people with learning disabilities’
- An opportunity to focus on local practice.
- Give you time for questions

what do we know

“An estimated 25-40% of people with learning disabilities have mental health problems... Commissioners and service providers will need to continue to ensure that mental health services are accessible to all disabled people.... The improvement of mental health services for people with learning disabilities [requires] inclusivity of mainstream mental health services for people with learning disabilities who have mental health problems”.

No health without mental health, Department of Health (2011)



Prevalence of mental health problems in people with learning disabilities

People with learning disabilities are more likely to develop mental health problems as compared with the general population.



1 in 4 people experience a mental health problem at some point in their life (Singleton et al, 2001)

Estimates range from 20 – 40% of people with a learning disability.



Risk Factors for Mental Health Problems for people with learning disabilities

People with learning disabilities are more likely to:

- live in poverty
- have few friends
- have other long term health problems and disabilities such as epilepsy and sensory impairments. (Emerson and Hatton, 2007)
- have fewer psychological and material resources to deal with adversity (Jahoda et al, 2006)
- experience social exclusion, poverty and abuse (Gravell, 2012).



Risk Factors for Mental Health Problems for people with learning disabilities

- risk-averse service cultures contribute to restrictive environments with fewer opportunities to build self-efficacy and develop problem-solving skills (Dagnan & Jahoda, 2006)



- encountered discrimination by not being given opportunities to get a job, socialise, have relationships developing low expectations. (FPLD, 'Count us in', 2002)



Risk Factors for Mental Health Problems for people with learning disabilities

- lack of meaningful activity can increase vulnerability for mental health difficulties such as depression (Stancliffe et al, 2011).
- People with learning disabilities have increased health needs compared to the wider population. Physical and mental health has a direct impact on one another. (Hardy, 2011)
- Communication and language – it can be difficult to communicate or articulate the symptoms of mental health. (The Count us in inquiry, FPLD, 2002)



Barriers early identification and diagnosis

- Diagnostic overshadowing. 'Its because of your learning disability'.
- Lack of knowledge by parents and professionals about the range of mental health problems people experience, and about who to go to for advice.
- Not being listened to.
- Referrals passed from service to service, particularly if the person had mild/moderate level needs.





Aims of the Improving the Mental Health Needs of People with Learning Disabilities project

-  • **raise awareness** of the mental health needs of people with learning disabilities among policy makers, health and social care services and anyone supporting or working with people with learning disabilities
-  • **develop a picture of what is currently happening** via a small survey, interviews and a reference group of people with learning disabilities
-  • **produce information guides** as recommended by those in the project.

What did people say

- people with learning disabilities should have the same rights and choices as everyone else



What did people with learning disabilities say



- People with learning disabilities felt that people did not see them they just saw their learning disability.



- The information that was provided was not accessible and in a format that they could understand



- people were not believed, listened or supported

 *‘m upset because staff say
forget it when I tell them I am*

What did people with learning disabilities say

They want more support and control over their own mental health.



- They said that a diary and information to explain what was happening to them would make it easier to talk to staff and tell the GP how they were feeling.



‘Sometimes I feel anxious and get angry. I don’t know what to do.’

Peter Cronin

People with learning disabilities wanted more control over their own mental health

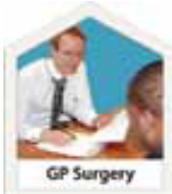
- 1. A guide that we can use to help us with keeping well.**
- 2. Information that we can give to our GP**



What did families say



85% of families felt that the treatment offered to their son/daughter, once received, was positive.



Families felt that access, getting the GP to believe them or refer them to a specialist, was the biggest barrier to their son/daughter's mental health.



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What did families say

- that the long wait was detrimental to their son/daughter's wellbeing.



However, once they reached specialist support they felt that this was of a very high quality.

'My son is now able to be himself. He is such a gentleman and all it took was for the psychologist to work with him and develop a support plan.'

Stories for discussion

– George

- Moved house to house
- Sectioned

What would have helped?

– Lizzy

- Supported housing
- Seemed upset

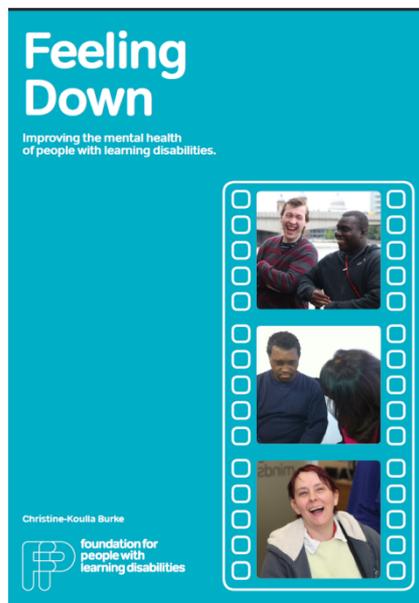
What would you do?

MHLD Report and Easy Read Guide

We have also produced an easy-read guide, *Feeling Down: looking after my mental health*, to help people with learning disabilities think about their mental health needs and support them to prepare for their visit to their doctor to talk about their feelings.



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