

# Learning Disabilities

Feb 2021

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## COVID-19

[Coronavirus and People with Learning Disabilities Research Update](#) The Coronavirus and People with Learning Disabilities research is different. It is different because researchers are talking to 1000 people with learning disabilities across the whole United Kingdom. Not people who are speaking FOR people with learning disabilities but self advocates.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): looking after people who lack mental capacity](#) Updated guidance to reflect the new national lockdown in England that began on 6 January 2021.

[Disability charities call on police chiefs to clarify rules on face mask exemptions](#) Disability charities have written to the National Police Chiefs' Council asking it to clarify to police officers the rules on face covering exemptions. The call comes as police officers are still wrongly claiming that people with disabilities must carry paperwork proving they are exempt from wearing face coverings.

[Paid Supporters preparing with people for Covid Vaccination](#) Learning Disability England has worked with members and partners to write a guide for people and organisations that offer paid support to people with learning disabilities. The guide helps them to prepare the people they support to make a decision about having the Coronavirus vaccine.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): providing home care](#) Updated 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): provision of home care' to add guidance on vaccinations and the NHS capacity tracker; and to amend the definition of 'home care'.

[Supported living services during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) Added a new document: 'Working with people in supported living this winter'.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): support for care homes](#) Added a new document: 'Your care home during winter'.

[Summary of COVID-19 medicines guidance: Learning disabilities](#) This page summarises and signposts to medicine related guidance from professional and government bodies relating to coronavirus and learning disabilities.

[Covid-19 deaths remain 'dramatically higher' in learning disability groups](#) The data from [Learning Disability Mortality Review](#) (LeDeR) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that 80% of the deaths of people with a learning disability in England were Covid-19-related in the week ending 22nd January. This is dramatically higher than the general population in England and Wales.

## Study

[Autism and social anxiety: qualitative research shows how we can help](#) A summary of a study that explores the relationship between autism and social anxiety in male adults.

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## Surveys

[Government proposal to change mental health law](#) The Government has published promising new proposals to change mental health law in England and Wales which could result in fewer autistic people being wrongly sent to mental health hospitals. You can have your say in this consultation by responding to the [Government's survey](#).

[Government launches public survey to tackle barriers faced by disabled people](#) The Disability Unit at the Cabinet Office has launched a public survey to gather views and experiences for the National Strategy of Disabled People which is planned for Spring 2021. The survey is seeking the views of disabled people, carers, charities and stakeholders. It will cover aspects such as employment, accessible public services, experiences of discrimination and abuse, and ways to access further support.

## Systematic Review

[Impact of antipsychotics in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#) This systematic review and meta-analysis found antipsychotics for children and adolescents with ASD more efficacious than placebo in reducing stereotypies, hyperactivity, irritability and obsessions, compulsions, and in increasing social communication and global functioning. Antipsychotics were also found to be more acceptable, but less safe than placebo.

## Publications

[Impact assessment of the Mental Capacity \(Amendment\) Act 2019](#) Assessment of the amendment, which introduced the Liberty Protection Safeguards to replace the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.

[Monitoring the quality of care and safety for people with a learning disability and/or people who are autistic in inpatient care](#) Guidance for commissioners and case managers to support the implementation of best practice in relation to commissioner oversight visits. This includes the minimum expectations for oversight visits during the coronavirus pandemic.

## Guidance

[Delivering safe, face-to-face adult day care](#) This guide aims to support you, day care managers, social workers, commissioners and providers, to restart or continue activities. It is focused on community-based day services, day centres (with and without personal care), including specialised day centre environments, and those with outdoor spaces.

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## News

[Study hints at microbiome differences in children with autism](#) Children with autism may have a subtly different set of bacteria in their gut than their non-autistic siblings.

[Autism protein may shape neuronal firing patterns](#) Excess UBE3A, an autism-linked protein, may shape how neurons fire. Most people with dup15q syndrome have some form of autism, and many have epilepsy, intellectual disability and developmental delay. But how UBE3A protein affects development is still unclear.

[Autistic children may have trouble predicting movements](#) The ‘predictive coding’ theory of autism, which proposes that an inability to predict what comes next — be it where a ball is likely to travel or how another person might respond to a gesture — underlies core autism traits.

[Oxytocin alters brain activity to boost sociability in mice missing autism gene](#) Infusions of the hormone oxytocin may make mice that model autism more social by normalizing their brain activity patterns.

[Two top autism genes may have a mechanism in common](#) Mutations in two genes linked to autism and intellectual disability may boost the immune response and cause synapse dysfunction.

[Sensory perception, cell signals disrupted in people and mice missing autism gene](#) People and mice with only one working copy of the autism gene SYNGAP1 may have trouble processing sights and sounds.

[Brain response to facial features may lag in autistic people](#) Looking at eyes, noses and mouths may prompt slower recognition in the brains of autistic people than in those of non-autistic people.

[Studies hint at effects of aging on autistic brains](#) People with autism or autism traits may be especially vulnerable to brain aging and cognitive decline, two studies suggest.

[Dopamine neurons may dampen social behaviour in mouse model of autism](#) Mice missing a copy of the autism-linked gene PTEN show a reduced preference for social interaction, possibly due to atypically large, overconnected dopamine neurons. Easing such overconnection may alleviate this trait.

[Loss of a top autism gene may alter neuron structure](#) Mutations in the autism-linked gene ASH1L change how neurons grow and develop.

[Two studies highlight role of ‘mosaic’ mutations in autism](#) Mutations seen in only some of the body’s cells often affect gene activity in the brains of people with autism, and can involve large segments of DNA.

[Missing autism gene may affect time perception in mice](#) Mice missing a copy of the autism-linked gene NRXN1 appear to perceive some time intervals as shorter than control mice do.

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[Circuit linking prefrontal cortex and brain's relay station regulates social behaviour in mice](#) A set of neurons connecting the prefrontal cortex and the thalamus helps regulate social interactions in mice.

[Female rats master social recognition later than males do](#) Young male rats can recognise rats they've recently met, whereas young females treat new acquaintances like strangers, research shows.

[Environment may have outsized effect on brain structure in autism](#) Environmental factors influence brain structure in autistic children more than in non-autistic children, according to an analysis of imaging data from twins.

[Vasopressin relieves social deficits in an autism mouse model](#) Mice missing a copy of MAGEL2 have trouble discerning between a familiar mouse and an unfamiliar one; treating them with the social hormone vasopressin reverses this deficit.

[Common variants link autism, ADHD, Tourette syndrome](#) Genetic variants that contribute to autism may also be involved in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and Tourette syndrome, according to a new study.

[Copy number variations linked to autism have diverse but overlapping effects](#) People with mutations in distant chromosomal regions often share a range of autism traits, even if they do not meet the diagnostic threshold for autism.

[Autistic children facing mental health crisis during lockdown](#) During Children's Mental Health Week 2021, the charity has published research revealing that nearly two thirds (63%) of autistic children and young people's mental health is worse than before the outbreak of the pandemic. Before Coronavirus, research showed that four in five children with autism experienced mental health issues.

## Statistics

[Health and Care of People with Learning Disabilities Experimental Statistics 2019 to 2020](#) The aim of this publication is to provide information about the key differences in healthcare between people with a learning disability and those without. It contains aggregated data on key health issues for people who are recorded by their GP as having a learning disability, and comparative data about a control group who are recorded by their GP as not having a learning disability.

[People with a learning disability prescribed higher rates of psychotropic medications](#) Patients with a learning disability and/or autism are prescribed antipsychotics, benzodiazepines and antidepressants at a significantly higher rate than in patients without a learning disability, new NHS data shows. In addition, only 57.8% of patients with a learning disability had a Learning Disability Health Check in 2019-20. Reductions in the numbers having a health check could be seen in all age groups apart from those patients who were aged 14-17 years.

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## **E-Learning**

[Independent advocacy under the Care Act 2014 - free e-learning course](#) The role of the independent advocate is to support an individual or carer to understand information, express their needs and wishes, secure their rights, represent their interests and support them to obtain the care and support they need.