



Criminal Justice Support Network

A project of Intellectual Disability Rights Service

What is intellectual disability?

A disability that primarily affects the way you learn.

About 2% of the population is described as having an intellectual disability.

It can affect the person in the following ways:

- It may take longer to learn things
- The person may need special training/teaching to learn things
- The person may have difficulty reading and writing
- It can affect how the person speaks
- It can affect how much the person understands
- The person may find it difficult to maintain eye contact
- The person may have difficulty understanding abstract concepts
- It can affect the person's ability to adapt to new or unfamiliar situations
- It can affect the person's ability to plan ahead
- It can affect the person's ability to problem solve.

Definition

Intellectual disability is a disability that occurs in the developmental period and is characterised by sub-average intellectual functioning, The IQ is assessed as 70 or under plus deficits in at least 2 areas of adaptive behaviour, ie: communication, self care, home living, social skills, self direction, leisure and work, learning.

Intellectual disability is best assessed by a psychologist

A constructive way to look at intellectual disability is to define it in terms of the support needs of people. This approach sees the **effect** of the disability as something that will vary and can be increased or reduced by external factors. It does not view intellectual disability as an unchangeable characteristic of the individual. The effect of the disability or the **capacity** of the person is a function not only of the disability but also a function of their environment and the support they receive.

So adjusting the environment and the support to meet the person's needs can increase the person's capacity and reduce the effect of the disability.