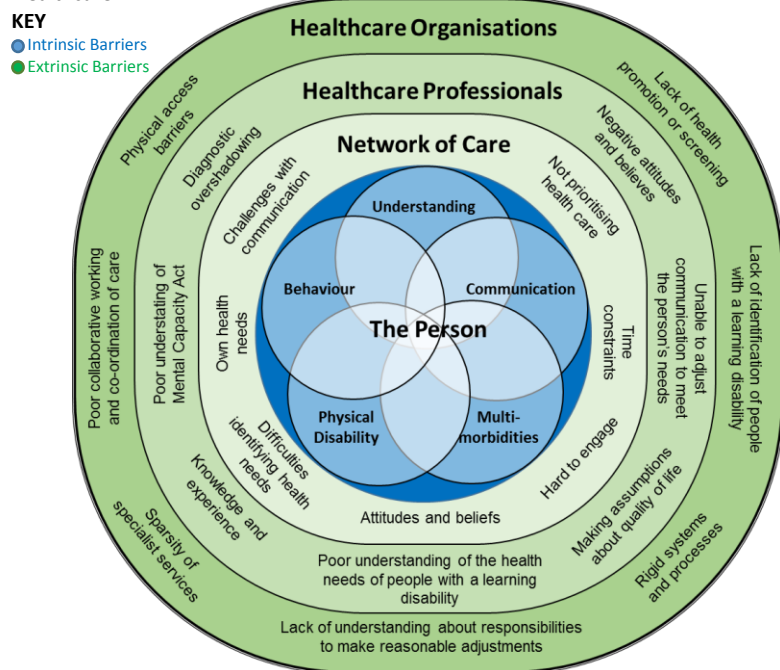


INTRODUCTION

Adults with a learning disability are evidenced to have poorer health outcomes; receive inadequate health care and have a shorter life expectancy than the general population. Adults with a learning disability have the right to access the same healthcare as the general population but may require adjustments to overcome those barriers to receive positive access and outcomes.

THE BARRIERS

Barriers to accessing health services are factors that prevent an individual gaining access to effective healthcare. These can manifest as physical, psychological, financial, graphical, cultural, language and resource barriers. Adults with a learning disability may face more than one barrier and the more barriers a person presents, the harder it can be to provide successful health care. Barriers can be categorised into intrinsic, those related to the person; and extrinsic, related to factors that arise outside the person but impact on their healthcare.



KEY

- Intrinsic Barriers
- Extrinsic Barriers

METHODS

The researchers conducted a five round Modified Delphi Technique study to develop a **Definition** and **Standards of Practice** for Specialist Learning Disability Physiotherapists. This involved a review of the current literature and four rounds of questionnaires to explore the views and opinions of an expert panel recruited via the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists for People with Learning Disability (ACPLD). The literature review and data collection extrapolated significant amount of text and qualitative data that was thematically analysed to explore the adjustments that specialist learning disability physiotherapists make to provide successful physiotherapy to adults with a learning disability.

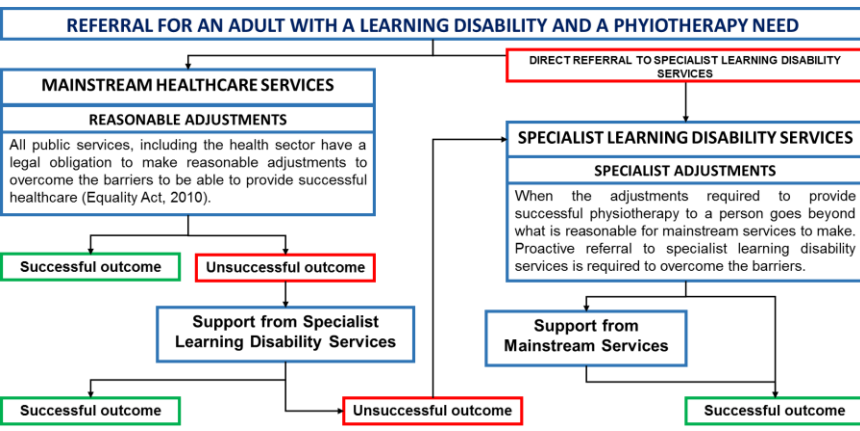
THE NEW DEFINITION OF SPECIALIST LEARNING DISABILITY PHYSIOTHERAPIST

“Learning disability physiotherapists provide specialist assessment, treatment and management to adults with a learning disability whose needs cannot be successfully met by mainstream services, even when reasonable adjustments are made. Physiotherapists will work in collaboration with the person, their network of care, mainstream health services, and the multidisciplinary team to enhance, optimise and maintain the person’s physical”

For specialist learning disability physiotherapy services to deliver the new definition for the specialist learning disability physiotherapist they **MUST**:

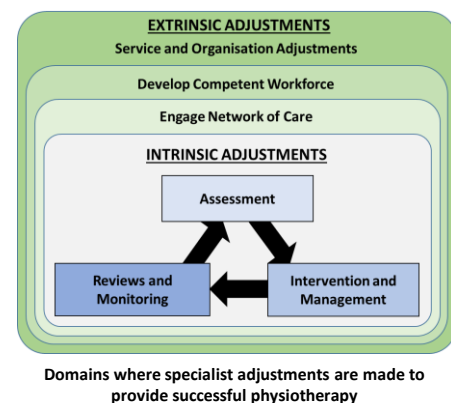
- Make the adjustments required to provide successful physiotherapy to AWLD that go beyond what is reasonable for mainstream services

PATHWAY TO PROVIDING SUCCESSFUL PHYSIOTHERAPY TO ADULTS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY



SPECIALIST ADJUSTMENTS

When the adjustments required to provide successful physiotherapy go beyond what is reasonable for mainstream services to make individual's will require support from specialist learning disability physiotherapy services. This is to either support positive access to and responses from health services; or to provide direct specialist assessment and intervention. To achieve this they will need to make **SPECIALIST ADJUSTMENTS** to overcome the intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to providing physiotherapy to adults with a learning disability.



SPECIALIST ADJUSTMENTS TO OVERCOME INTRINSIC BARRIERS

OVER-ARCHING

- Develop an understanding of the person’s comprehension and communication.
- Develop long term relationships to build knowledge and understanding of the individual and their network of care.

ASSESSMENT

- Offer individually tailored assessments over a prolonged period with multiple contacts
- Make assessments flexible, adaptable and creative
- Complete assessments in the different environments
- Link information from different sources

INTERVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

- Develop individually tailored management plans in collaboration with the multi disciplinary team and mainstream services and disseminate accessible management plans
- Set functional and long-term goals and offer treatment and management over prolonged episodes of care
- Make onward referrals and support positive access
- Offer specialist interventions such as rebound therapy and aquatic therapy
- Support a positive risk management approach

REVIEW AND MONITORING

- Review and monitor after delegation
- Review and monitor new management plans or where they been changed
- Contribute to reviewing mainstream management plans

SPECIALIST ADJUSTMENTS TO OVERCOME EXTRINSIC BARRIERS

ENGAGE THE PERSON'S NETWORK OF CARE

- The person’s network of care is integral to providing successful physiotherapy to adults with a learning disability and invest time into developing relationships
- Develop physiotherapy management plans that consider their impact on the person’s network of care and delegate them for completion on a daily and sustainable basis

DEVELOP COMPETENT WORKFORCE

- Provide training and education to the person’s network of care, the local community workforce and healthcare professionals to improve the physiotherapy management for adults with a learning disability

SERVICE LEVEL ADJUSTMENTS

- Offer a model of service delivery which facilitates extended episodes of care; flexible working patterns; continuity of care; a proactive approach and regular reviews and monitoring for adults with a learning disability
- Develop relationships and pathways with relevant local healthcare services
- Support mainstream healthcare services to make REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS
- Provide training and education to healthcare professionals to develop knowledge and skills of mainstream healthcare professionals
- Provide a co-ordinated approach to care from health and social care services

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

All public services, including the health sector have a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to overcome the barriers to adults with a leaning disability accessing successful healthcare. Reasonable adjustments can mean physical alterations to buildings such as providing lifts, wide doors, ramps and tactile signage. But may also mean changes to policies, procedures and staff training to ensure that services work equally well for people with a learning disability. Public sector organisations should not simply wait and respond to difficulties as they emerge, the duty on them is ‘anticipatory’. When the appropriate adjustments are made, adults with a learning disability can have successful outcomes from accessing mainstream healthcare services. However, some adults are unable to access mainstream services even when reasonable adjustments are made. The adjustments required to provide success health care to this population go beyond what is reasonable for mainstream service and require specialist knowledge and skills to provide. These adjustments as less well understood.

.....**THEREFORE**, the researchers explored the adjustments specialist learning disability physiotherapists make to provide successful physiotherapy to adults with learning disability as part of a research study to develop **STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR SPECIALIST LEARNING DISABILITY PHYSIOTHERAPISTS**.

CONCLUSION

The adjustments that specialist learning disability physiotherapists make to meet the physiotherapy needs of the adult with a learning disability go far beyond what is possible and reasonable for mainstream services. Providing these adjustments requires the specialist knowledge and skills, and a model of working which facilitates the development of relationships with adults with a learning disability and their network of care. Therefore, must be delivered by specialist learning disability services who are appropriately commissioned and resourced to achieve successful outcomes.