

General Learning Disabilities

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The Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) (1993) referred to 'general learning disabilities' as 'mental handicap' and adopted the classification system used by The World Health Organisation to indicate specific levels of disability. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) continues to adopt The World Health Organisation classification system, but uses the term 'general learning disability' to refer to the special educational needs of students.

It is important to be aware of the significance of the differences internationally in definitions of learning disabilities. Moderate learning difficulties in the UK are broadly comparable with moderate to mild intellectual disabilities (Australia/New Zealand), mild mental retardation or educable mentally retarded (US/Canada) and mild general learning disabilities in Ireland. In the UK, severe learning difficulties are broadly comparable with moderate intellectual disabilities (Australia/New Zealand), moderate to severe mental retardation or trainable mentally retarded (US/Canada) and moderate to severe general learning disabilities in Ireland. Profound and multiple learning difficulties in the UK are broadly comparable to severe intellectual disabilities (Australia/New Zealand), severe to profound mental retardation (US/Canada) and profound general learning disabilities in Ireland.



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