



# Estimating the Current Need/Demand for Supports for People with Learning Disabilities in England

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No information is kept at a national level on the number of people in England who have a learning disability.

We have used two approaches to estimating the current number of men and women in England who are likely to have a learning disability.

## Administrative Prevalence

- We have extracted information from locally held learning disability 'registers' on the age and gender of 15,000 people with learning disabilities who are known to services in 24 Local Authorities/District Councils covering a population base of 3.2 million people (7% of the population of England). The Authorities are listed in Appendix 1 along with information on their level of social deprivation.
- We combined this information with 2001 Census data on the population of each Local Authority to calculate age and gender specific prevalence rates for **people with learning disabilities who are known to learning disability services** (administrative prevalence). These estimates of administrative prevalence are given in Appendix 2.
- We then used these prevalence estimates to calculate the number of men and women in England who are likely to have a learning disability and be known to learning disability services.

The results of this exercise are given in the following Table and Figure.

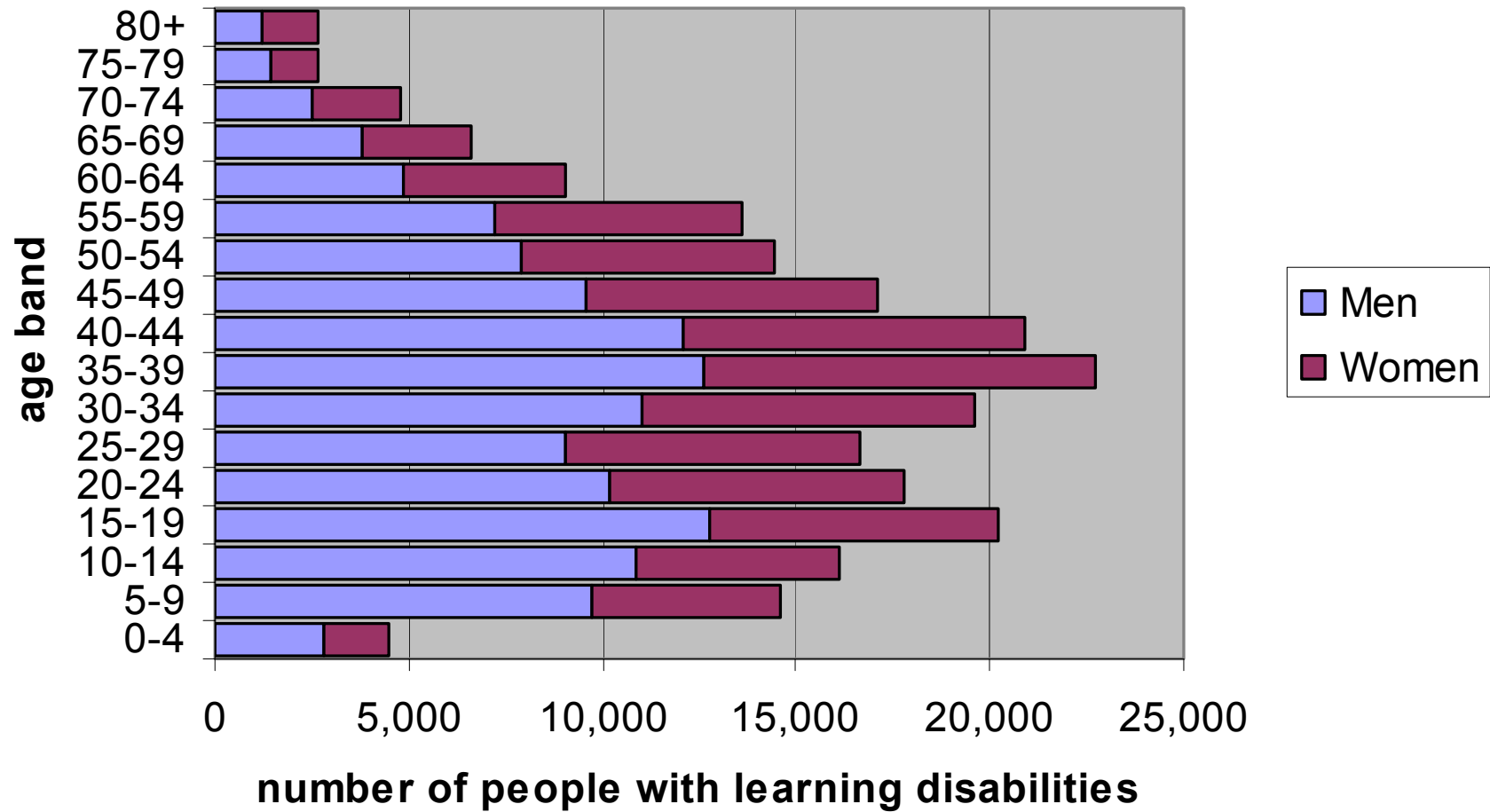
We estimate that 224,000 people in England have a learning disability and are known to learning disability services. This is equivalent to an overall administrative prevalence rate of 0.46% of the general population.

This includes

- 169,000 people aged 20 or more (93,000 men; 75,000 women - equivalent to an overall administrative prevalence rate of 0.46% of the adult population)
- 143,000 people aged between 20 and 59 (80,000 men; 63,000 women - equivalent to an overall administrative prevalence rate of 0.54% of the working age population)
- 26,000 people aged 60 or more (14,000 men; 12,000 women - equivalent to an overall administrative prevalence rate of 0.25% of the elderly population)

Estimated Number of People with Learning Disabilities Known to Services in England			
Age	Male	Female	Total
0-4	2,823	1,633	4,456
5-9	9,690	4,935	14,625
10-14	10,854	5,248	16,102
15-19	12,759	7,427	20,186
20-24	10,195	7,587	17,782
25-29	9,044	7,620	16,664
30-34	10,982	8,606	19,588
35-39	12,640	10,107	22,747
40-44	12,100	8,834	20,934
45-49	9,575	7,543	17,118
50-54	7,917	6,552	14,469
55-59	7,217	6,404	13,621
60-64	4,878	4,142	9,020
65-69	3,780	2,857	6,637
70-74	2,489	2,326	4,814
75-79	1,445	1,250	2,695
80+	1,224	1,457	2,681
<b>Total</b>	<b>129,611</b>	<b>94,528</b>	<b>224,139</b>

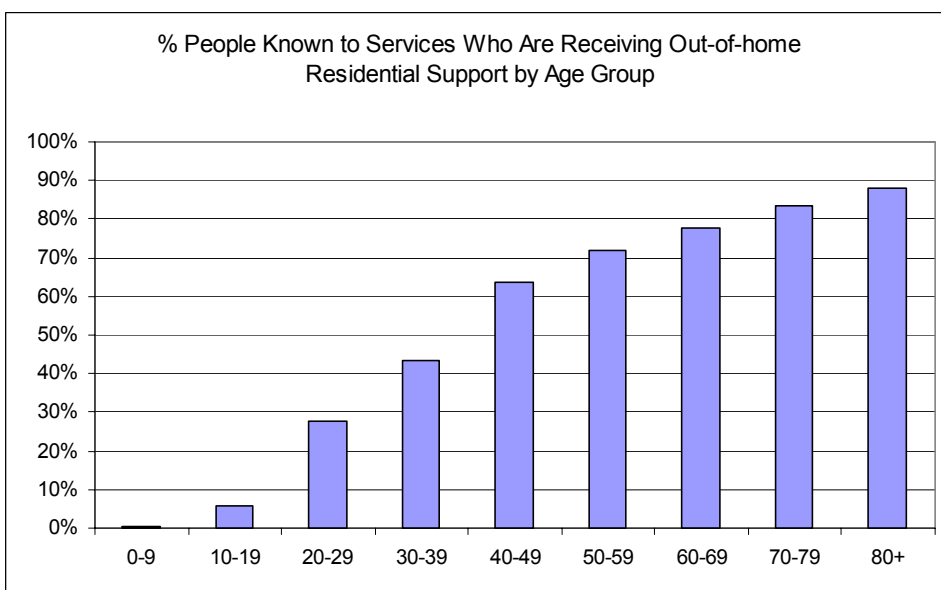
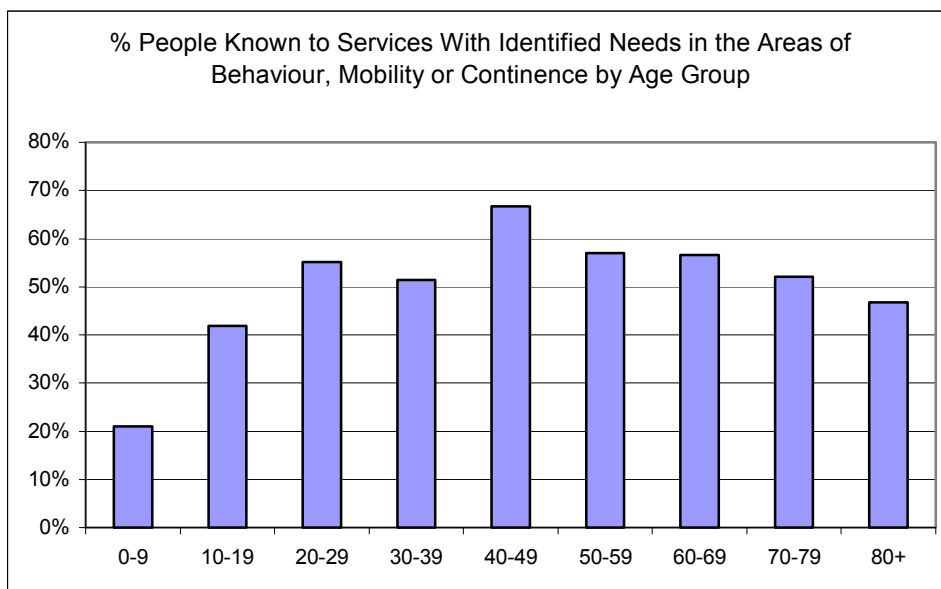
## Predicted Number of People with Learning Disabilities Known to Services in England



The majority of people known to specialist services will have a severe learning disability. Information from four registers (Sheffield, Merton, Sutton, South Warwickshire) was pooled to give an indication of the percentage of **people with learning disabilities who are known to learning disability services** of different ages who: (1) have identified needs in the areas of challenging behaviour OR mobility OR continence; (2) are receiving any kind of out-of-home residential support.

As these estimates are based on information from just four registers they do need to be treated with a degree of caution. They do suggest, however, that of adults (age 20+) with learning disabilities who are known to learning disability services:

- 57% have significant levels of health/social care needs and
- 56% receive some form of out-of-home residential support, with this figure rising to 76% in the 50+ age group.



## 'True' Prevalence

We know that only a minority of people with less severe learning disabilities are known to services<sup>1</sup>.

- In order to estimate the true numbers of people with learning disabilities in England we made an estimate of the 'hidden' numbers of people with (predominantly) mild learning disabilities so that when we added these to the known administrative prevalence rates it would give an overall prevalence of approximately 2.5% of the general population for the age group 15-24. This is close to the expected prevalence of learning disabilities<sup>2</sup>.
- We used data from the Manchester SEN database to make adjustments to the estimates of the 'hidden' numbers to reflect the increasing prevalence of learning disabilities throughout childhood (as more children get identified as having mild learning disabilities).
- For older age groups we reduced the predicted 'hidden' prevalence rates by 0.1% per decade to reflect increased mortality among people with mild learning disabilities.
- For all age groups we adjusted the 'hidden' prevalence rates to reflect the 1.6:1 male:female ratio which is typically found in epidemiological studies of people with less severe learning disabilities.

These estimates of true prevalence are given in Appendix 3. The results of this exercise are given in the following Table and Figures.

We estimate that 985,000 people in England have a learning disability. This is equivalent to an overall prevalence rate of 2% of the general population.

This includes

- 796,000 people aged 20 or more (448,000 men; 338,000 women - equivalent to an overall prevalence rate of 2.2% of the adult population)
- 622,000 people aged between 20 and 59 (365,000 men; 258,000 women - equivalent to an overall prevalence rate of 2.3% of the working age population)
- 174,000 people aged 60 or more (94,000 men; 80,000 women - equivalent to an overall prevalence rate of 1.7% of the elderly population).

Estimated Number of People with Learning Disabilities in England			
Age	Male	Female	Total
0-4	2,823	1,633	4,456
5-9	19,289	11,026	30,315
10-14	45,567	27,313	72,880
15-19	49,978	31,136	81,114
20-24	45,447	31,329	76,777
25-29	45,603	32,931	78,534
30-34	53,323	37,920	91,243
35-39	54,022	38,405	92,427
40-44	49,237	33,912	83,150
45-49	41,031	28,890	69,920
50-54	42,133	29,745	71,879
55-59	33,703	24,401	58,103
60-64	27,427	19,724	47,152
65-69	22,404	16,289	38,693
70-74	18,451	15,070	33,521
75-79	12,992	11,978	24,970
80+	12,547	16,980	29,527
<b>Total</b>	<b>575,979</b>	<b>408,682</b>	<b>984,661</b>

<sup>1</sup> For example, in a follow-up to age 22 of young people with mild learning disabilities in Aberdeen, only 20% were receiving specialist services although 73% had problems in daily living (Richardson, S.A., & Koller, H. (1996). Twenty Two Years: Causes and Consequences of Mental Retardation. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.)

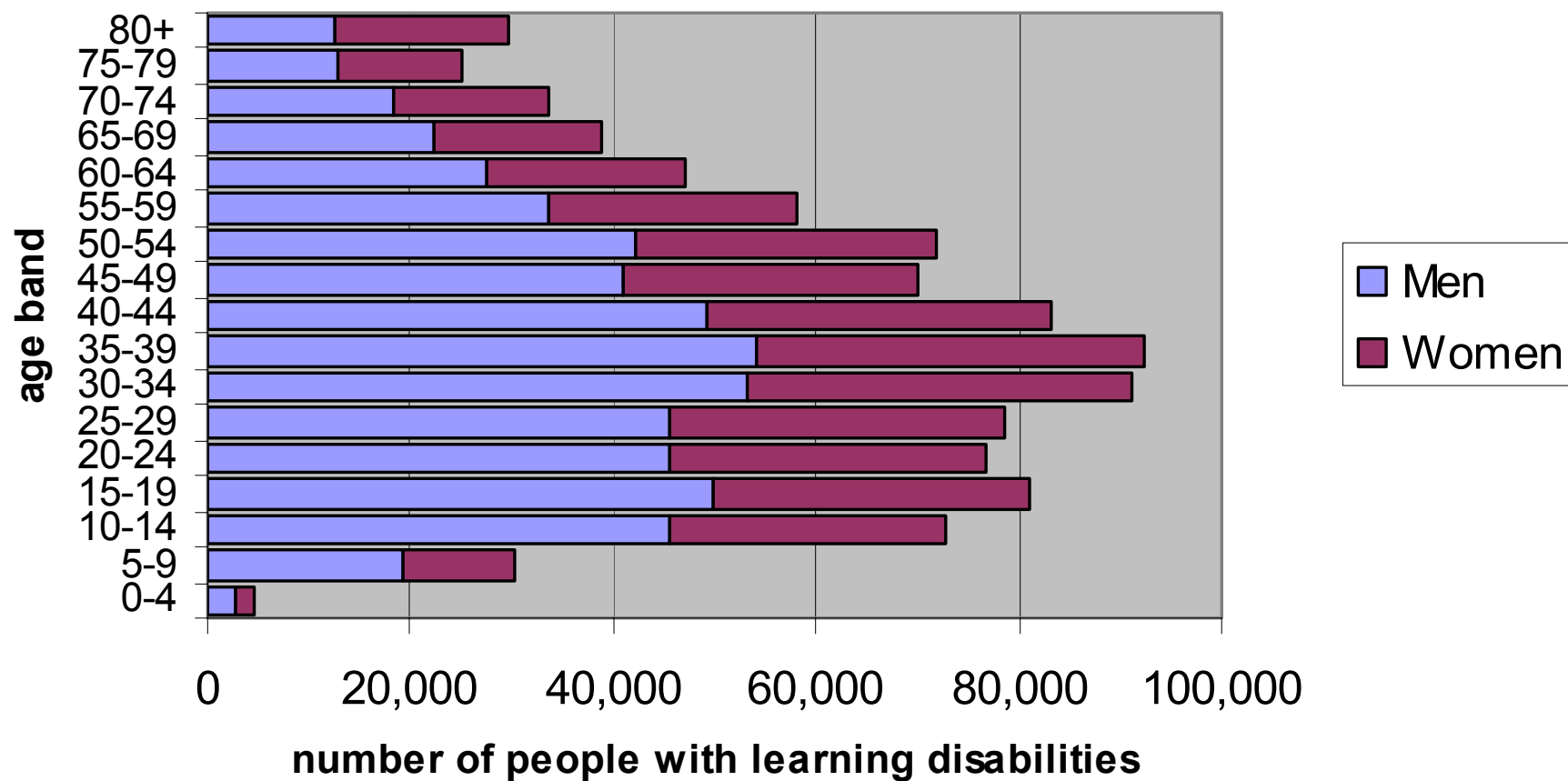
<sup>2</sup> Leonard, H., & Wen, X. (2002). The epidemiology of mental retardation: challenges and opportunities in the new millennium. Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews, 8, 117-134.

It is important to keep in mind that people with learning disabilities who are not known to specialist services may still have some significant support needs. For example, in a follow-up of the National Child Development Study cohort to age 33, people with mild learning disabilities were significantly more likely than their peers to be still living with their parents, be unemployed, have literacy and numeracy problems and to experience high levels of psychological distress<sup>3</sup>.

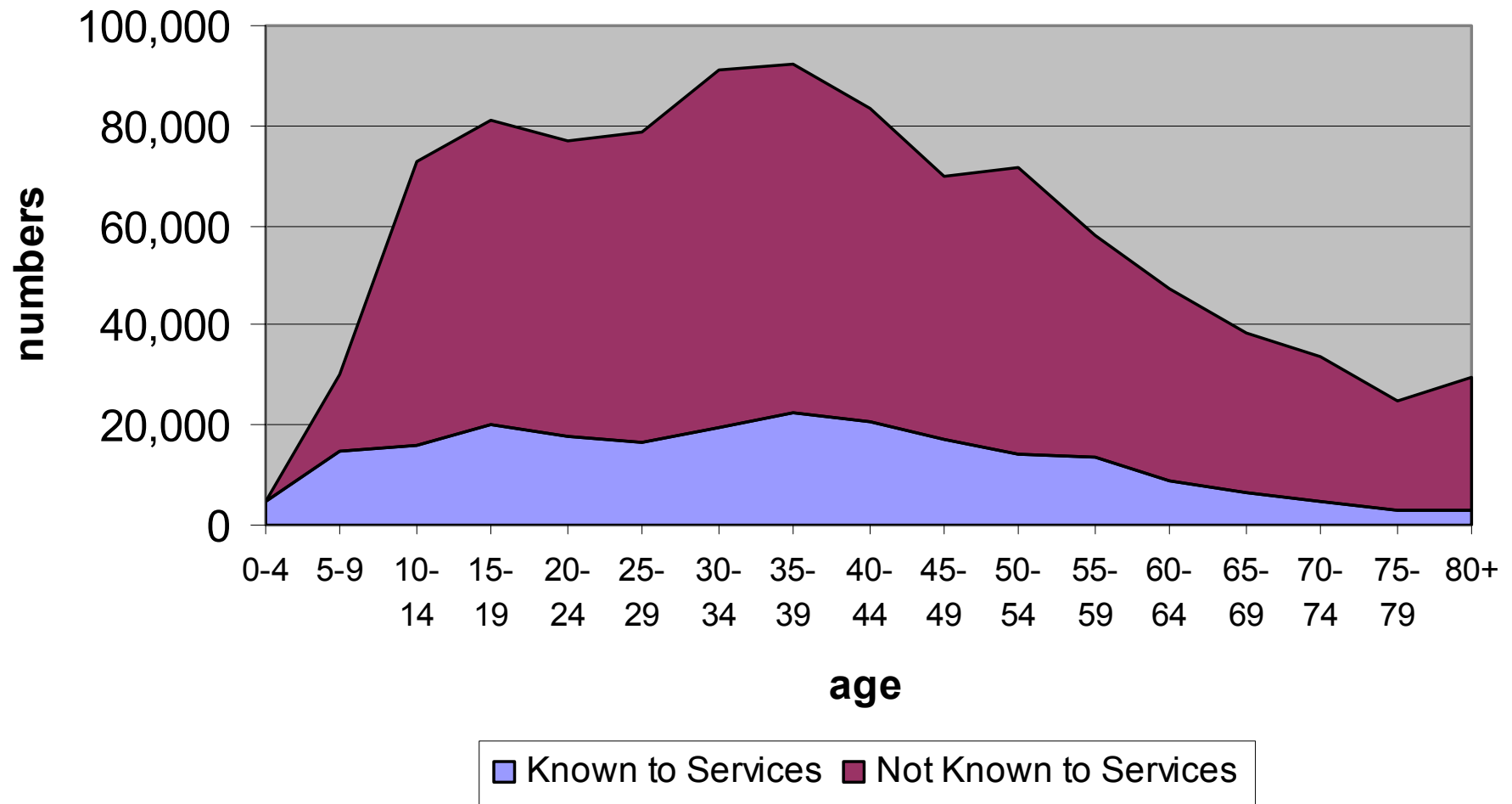
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<sup>3</sup> Maughan, B., Collishaw, S., & Pickles, A. (1999). Mild mental retardation: Psychosocial functioning in adulthood. Psychological Medicine 29, 351-366. See also, Fujiura, G. (2003). Continuum of intellectual disability: Demographic evidence for the 'Forgotten Generation'. Mental Retardation 41, 420-429.

## Predicted Number of People with Learning Disabilities in England



# Estimated Number of People with Learning Disabilities for England



## Appendix 1: Participating Local Authorities/District Councils

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Deprivation Quintile	Local Authority
1 (Least deprived 20%)	Brentwood Chelmsford Rochford Stratford-on-Avon Uttlesford
2	Braintree Castle Point Colchester Epping Forest Merton Maldon Sutton Warwick
3	Chorley Harlow South Ribble Tendring Trafford West Lancashire
4	Basildon Southend-on-Sea Thurrock
5 (Most deprived 20%)	Manchester Sheffield

**Note:** Deprivation quintile was calculated from the Average Score of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004.

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## Appendix 2: Estimated Administrative Prevalence of Learning Disabilities

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Age	Male	Female	Total
0-4	0.19%	0.11%	0.15%
5-9	0.61%	0.32%	0.47%
10-14	0.66%	0.33%	0.50%
15-19	0.82%	0.50%	0.67%
20-24	0.69%	0.51%	0.60%
25-29	0.56%	0.46%	0.51%
30-34	0.59%	0.45%	0.52%
35-39	0.66%	0.51%	0.59%
40-44	0.70%	0.51%	0.60%
45-49	0.62%	0.48%	0.55%
50-54	0.47%	0.38%	0.43%
55-59	0.52%	0.46%	0.49%
60-64	0.42%	0.34%	0.38%
65-69	0.37%	0.26%	0.31%
70-74	0.28%	0.22%	0.25%
75-79	0.21%	0.13%	0.16%
80+	0.18%	0.11%	0.13%
Total	0.55%	0.39%	0.46%

### Appendix 3: Estimated True Prevalence of Learning Disabilities

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Age	Male	Female	Total
0-4	0.19%	0.11%	0.15%
5-9	1.21%	0.72%	0.97%
10-14	2.76%	1.73%	2.26%
15-19	3.22%	2.10%	2.67%
20-24	3.09%	2.11%	2.60%
25-29	2.84%	1.98%	2.40%
30-34	2.87%	1.97%	2.41%
35-39	2.82%	1.95%	2.38%
40-44	2.86%	1.95%	2.40%
45-49	2.66%	1.84%	2.25%
50-54	2.51%	1.74%	2.12%
55-59	2.44%	1.74%	2.09%
60-64	2.34%	1.62%	1.97%
65-69	2.17%	1.46%	1.80%
70-74	2.08%	1.42%	1.72%
75-79	1.89%	1.25%	1.52%
80+	1.86%	1.23%	1.43%
Total	2.41%	1.62%	2.00%