



SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

DIRECTORATE

DEFINITION OF DISABILITY USED BY

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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The intention of this definition is to clarify who should be regarded as disabled for the purposes of assessment under the Children Act 1989 and other related legislation, including the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 and Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000.

It also seeks to reflect the "Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families" which looks beyond the impairment by focusing on the child's developmental needs, parenting capacity and family and environmental factors.

The definition should be used as a tool to assist in clarifying whether the impact of any impairments are of sufficient severity to justify being described as disabling when considered within the context of the family and environment. A child who does not meet the criteria for being regarded as disabled may still be eligible or assessment as a child in need under Section 17 paragraph 10 (a) or (b).

A child or young person with a disability is under the age of 18 and has a severe or significant delay compared with others of the same age. This is due to impairments that are expected to be life-long (but may be episodic) in one or more of the following area: hearing, vision, speech and language, physical, learning, consciousness. Behaviour of a profound nature has to be in addition to at least one of the above.

The effect of the impairment and how disabling it is will be a combination of the extent of the impairment and the impact of the family and environment on the child.

Hearing	Significant	The child or young person has difficulty even with hearing aids, or has, or is likely to have, persistent difficulty with language and communication.
	Profound	The child or young person has little or no hearing, with little or no benefit from hearing aids.
Vision	Significant	The child or young person is partially sighted, with visual difficulties sufficient to impair everyday activities and/or development, despite the use of visual aids.
	Profound	The child or young person is blind, with no useful vision.
Communication	Significant	The child or young person has significant difficulties communicating through speech and language and has significant difficulties in managing social situations and as a result is unable to participate in the normal activities of someone of his/her age.
	Profound	The child or young person has no meaningful speech or language and therefore is unlikely to use speech as the primary means of communication.

Physical (gross motor skills)	Significant	The child or young person has physical difficulty or chronic illness resulting in long term impairment of health or development, even with the provision of drugs, diet or aids.
	Profound	The child or young person has difficulty with all basic functions, of such severity that assistance is likely to be required.
Physical (fine motor skills)	Significant	The child or young person requires assistance to complete manual tasks requiring fine motor control in practical time.
	Profound	The child or young person is dependent in most self-help tasks that require fine motor control.
Learning	Significant	The child or young person has a significant and permanent learning impairment sufficient to prevent him/her from fulfilling roles or performing activities which are generally understood to be within the capacity of that age and cultural background.
	Profound	The child or young person has profound or multiple learning disabilities.
Consciousness	Significant	The child or young person experiences periods of absences that do not render them unconscious but can leave them confused.
	Profound	The child or young person experiences periods of unconsciousness which require treatment or care to ensure their safety.
Behaviour	Profound	The child or young person has emotional or behavioural difficulties to be so severe in the long term that they seriously impair the quality of life, resulting in an inability to function in normal social contexts or constituting a risk to themselves or others.

The above definition has been developed using research from the DoH and drawing on other examples of how disability is defined within a context of service assessment and provision. It will be for the worker involved, in conjunction with parents and other agencies to clarify how a child's particular difficulty should be described.

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