

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

Learning Disabilities and Autism

Summary points

- There were around 9,250 adults (18+) predicted to have some level of learning disability in Bristol in 2023, forecast to increase to 9,740 in 2030.
- 3,840 adults (18+) were predicted to have some level of autistic spectrum condition in 2023, forecast to increase to 4,045 in 2030.
- Approximately 2,885 pupils are recorded as having a learning disability in Bristol schools and nearly 1,455 pupils are recorded as having some level of autistic spectrum condition (School Census January 2023)

Adults with Learning Disabilities

Data from GP patient registers¹ in 2022/23 indicates there are around 2,895 people (all ages, including children) recorded as having a Learning Disability (LD) in Bristol. This will focus mainly on those with moderate to severe LD who are more likely to require support. This represents 0.5% of the patient population, which is slightly lower than the South West (0.59%) and the England average (0.56%).

Additional data for the same period shows that 1,150 adults (18+) with a learning disability are getting long-term support from Bristol City Council, equivalent to a rate of 3.10 per 1,000 population. This is lower than the England average of 3.21 per 1,000 population and the Core City average of 3.20 per 1,000 population (Figure 1).

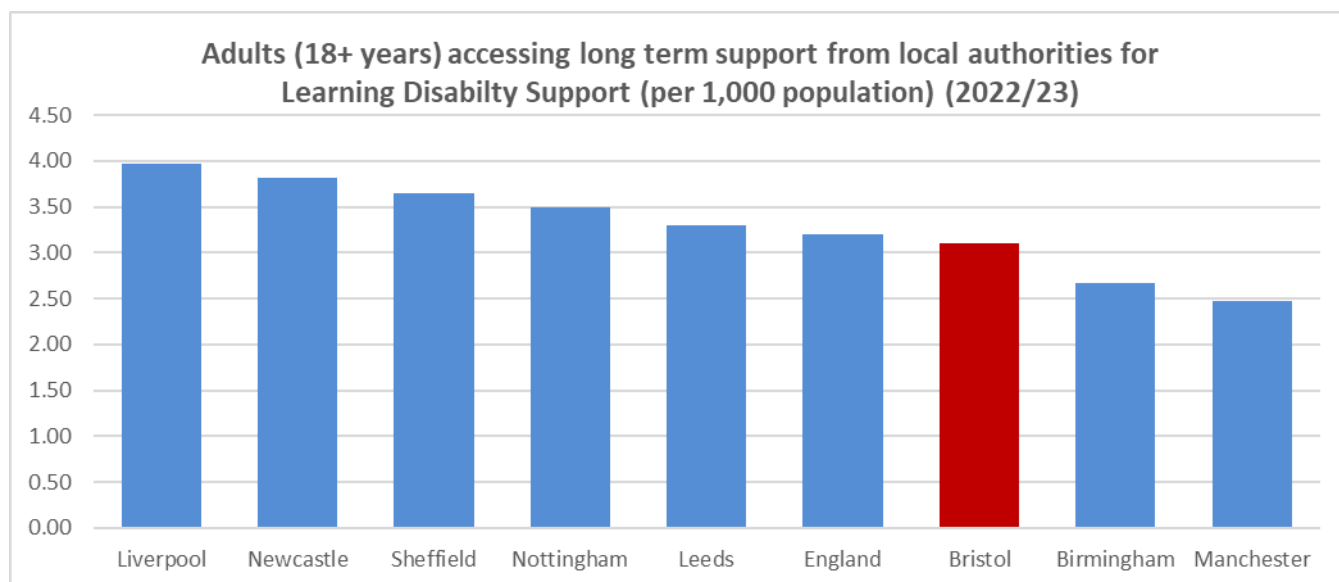


Fig 1: Adults with learning disability getting long-term support from local authorities (per 1,000 population – Core Cities Source: NHS Digital: Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report, England 2022/23

¹ NHS Quality Outcomes Framework, QOF, 2021/22.

Data from the Institute of Public Care² estimates that there are around 9,250 adults (18+) predicted to have some level of learning disability in Bristol in 2023. Of these, around 1,985 adults are estimated to have a moderate or severe learning disability. This is predicted to rise to 9,740 adults with some level of learning disability and 2,100 adults with a moderate or severe learning disability in 2030.

BCC Adult Social Care data for 2022/23 shows approximately³:

- 785 clients with a LD (aged 18+) receive a community support service
- 340 clients with a LD are in care homes
- 135 clients with a LD receive a direct payment to support their needs
- 50 clients with a LD receive domestic care
- 25 clients with a LD receive extra care housing

Figure 2 below shows a 24% increase in demand for the community support service over the past 8 years, highlighting an increase in people with LD being supported to live in the community.

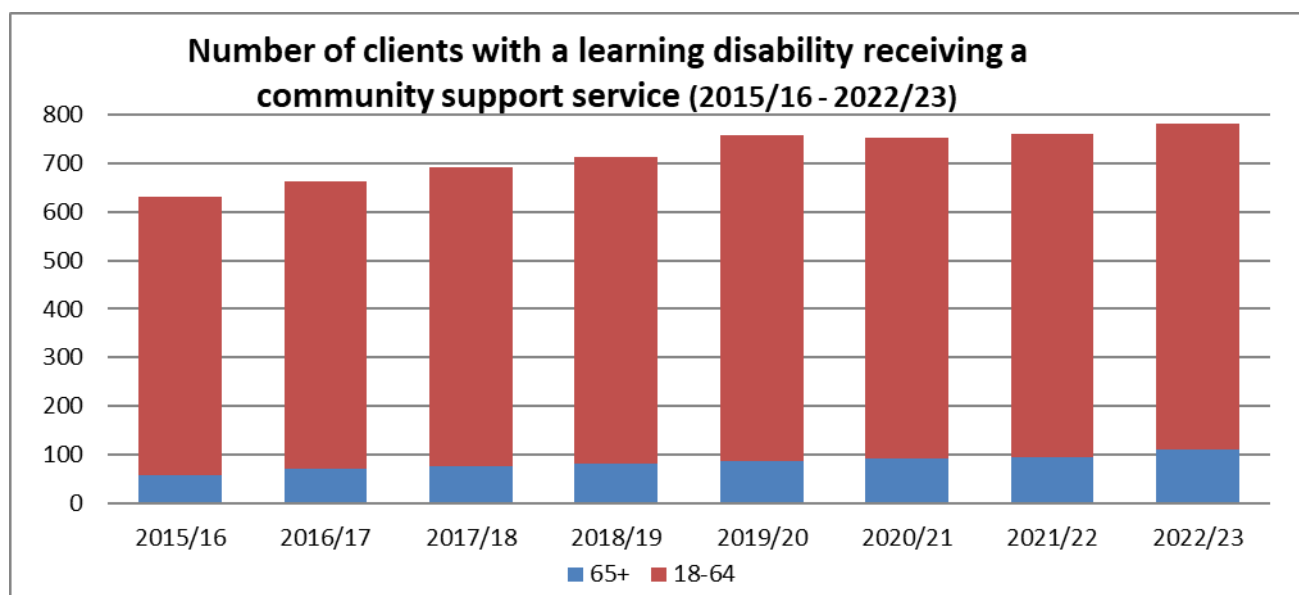


Figure 2: Number of clients with an LD who receive a community based service by age group: Source: BCC Information and Analysis Team, January 2024

Equalities data: Of these clients with LD in the community, 674 (86%) were aged 18 – 64 and 109 (14%) were aged 65 and over.

Children with Learning Difficulties

According to the School Census (January 2023) there were around 2,885 pupils recorded as having a Learning Difficulty in Bristol schools, including 1,490 children with a specific learning difficulty, 1,160 children with a moderate learning difficulty, around 150 with a severe learning difficulty and just under 85 with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

² Institute of Public Care provides projection data for older people ([POPPI](#)) and adults ([PANSI](#)).

³ A small number of clients may utilise more than 1 service

People with Learning Difficulties: health inequalities

People with learning disabilities have poorer health than the general population; a lot of this is avoidable. Difficulties in getting effective healthcare when it is needed can make them worse⁴. National research⁵ from a few years ago has shown that men with learning disabilities die an average 13 years sooner than the wider population and women die 20 years sooner, and that there are increased rates of health conditions for people with learning disabilities, including epilepsy, mental health and heart disease.

Autistic Spectrum Conditions

According to The National Autistic Society “Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK”.

In terms of overall population prevalence⁶, there are estimated to be 3,840 adults (18+) in Bristol with some level of autistic spectrum condition in 2023. These numbers are predicted to increase to 4,045 by 2030.

Equalities data: By age group, there are estimated to be 575 older people (aged 65+) and 3,260 people aged 18-64 with some level of autistic spectrum condition. There is a significant gender gap between adults with some level of autistic spectrum condition with males accounting for 90% of all adults and females 10%.

BCC Adult Social Care data shows that 155 adults aged 18-64 received support for autism during 2022/23, including 103 adults who received a community support service and 38 who received a direct payment to support their personal needs. Although numbers are low there has been a significant increase over the last few years with just 38 adults receiving support in 2015/16. Note – Many people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions do not require formal interventions from services.

For children, more detailed information is available through Special Educational Needs data. The School Census shows there were just under 1,455 pupils recorded with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder in Bristol schools in January 2023.

Further data / links / consultations:

- **Learning Disability Profiles** - a range of data about people with learning disabilities at Local Authority level
- [The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report, England, 2022-23 - NHS Digital](#)

⁴ Statement from Public Health England [Learning Disability Profiles](#)

⁵ “Confidential Inquiry into premature deaths of people with learning disabilities”; University of Bristol, 2013; www.bristol.ac.uk/cipold

⁶ Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information (PANSI) and Projecting Older People Population Information System (POPPI)

Support links:

- Bristol City Council services: [Help for people with learning difficulties](#)
- Bristol City Council services: [Support for parents of children with autism](#)
- Bristol City Council services: www.bristol.gov.uk/social-care-health/autism
- [BASS Autism Services for Adults](#)

Covid-19 impact:

Research by the London School of Economics and by autism charities [Left stranded](#) report found that the pandemic has had a significant impact on autistic people and have exacerbated many of the inequalities autistic people already faced like loneliness, anxiety and exclusion from public spaces, as well as creating new challenges. The government have used these findings and refreshed their 'national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026', aiming to improve the lives of autistic people, their families and carers.

Date updated: February 2024**Date of next update:** February 2025