



Why are we a “Learning Disability” Community of Practice?

Our purpose

In 2020, we, the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Learning disability Community of Practice (KSS LD CoP) published a report detailing a refresh of the community shared purpose. The full report can be downloaded and read [here](#).

During September 2020 a consultation with community members was held virtually. The following updated purpose of the Community of Practice was decided upon:

“To enable people with learning disabilities to live healthy, safe and fulfilled lives.”

The motivation of the Community of Practice is to empower and enable health, care and education professionals and allies to work in partnership with people with learning disabilities and their families to:

1. Define and eradicate inequalities in health and wellbeing;
2. Implement standards and share good practice
3. Enable person centered social inclusion.

What about autistic people?

Over the years, we, the Community of Practice steering group have been contacted a number of times by community members, arm’s-length bodies and others to ask the question “is there a reason you are not a learning disability and autism Community of Practice?”

After discussion and debate in the Community of Practice Steering group (which includes autistic people and people with a learning disability), one member wrote the following statement and sought to validate this with a critical friend, Dr Dinah Murray. This statement reflects the position the Community of Practice now adopts:

“Those of us who are autistic and without a learning (intellectual) disability have very different needs and shouldn’t be placed into the same category. By doing this, this will dilute the Community of Practices focus and apart from ‘experts by experience’ in the steering group, we don’t have the expertise to manage this. Neurodivergent individuals need their own spaces and we need to steer Commissioners and other professional bodies away from this mindset that ‘we are the same and should be lumped together.’”

(Tracey Eyles, Steering group member, endorsed by Dr Dinah Murray June 2021).



Therefore, the Community of Practice's focus will remain supporting people with a learning disability, including people with a learning disability who are autistic or who might have conditions that affect their physical or mental health.

Mutual support and learning

Our community is best described by [Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner in 2015](#) as a group *"of people who share a concern or a passion for something ...and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"*.

The Kent, Surrey and Sussex Learning Disability Community of Practice are keen to share our learning about developing and sustaining a community of practice with other similar groups. We welcome enquiries from other communities or groups who share similar aims.

Our community is open to all who value our shared purpose so please consider subscribing to receive our regular updates and become a member. [Click here](#) for more details.