



# UK HEALTH AND LEARNING DISABILITY NETWORK April 2011

## TESTIMONIALS

### Jan-Net Ltd



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Keeping you connected and in the loop

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### Academic

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Hi Janet,

I have been a member of the LD forum for several years and have always found it not only a useful resource of information but also a great way for networking with others, within LD circles and beyond.

As a Registered LD Nurse I have also found that it has supported me in my professional role keeping me up to date with the ever changing world of policies, legislation and practices. Further, as a PhD student I have used it as a regular point of contact where I have been able to get in touch with individuals with similar interests to discuss further matters pertaining to my research. I also have had no hesitation in recommending the LD forum to others, particularly individuals who may not be 'aware' of the resources available thru the BILD website and the forum, in particular. These include other professionals who have an interest in disability matters and in developing their practices and as a consequence supporting the needs/rights of disabled people, including people with a learning disability.

**Shirley Durell**  
**Research Student, Coventry University**

Dear Janet

I am an academic clinician, working in community-based services for people with intellectual disabilities and as a researcher in the Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge.

I access many resources as part of my work,

but none is as comprehensive as the UK Health and Learning Disability Network in

terms of its scope (policy, sharing practice, events etc) and the range of people from different backgrounds who respond to the postings.

I very much hope that it will be possible to continue funding for this invaluable resource.

**Isabel Clare**  
**Consultant Clinical & Forensic Psychologist,**  
**University of Cambridge**

I have been using these networks for several years and I have found them an invaluable resource. They are a hugely effective way of contacting people who have relevant expertise. I have used them as a way of finding out about small pieces of relevant, unpublished research, which would be extremely hard to find another way. They also provide a useful forum for sharing findings from research which means that this information is quickly shared with people who can benefit from it, but who may not have access to published journals.

I have also been able to recommend them to local clinicians that I have worked with. For example, they have used them to source easy read information sheets that they have then been able to share with their patients. This would otherwise have been very time-consuming but as so many people are willing to share their work, it just took a quick request. In the time I have been using these networks I have seen people share service models, effective ways of working, information sheets and job descriptions.

These networks provide a quick and easy way to contact whole range of stakeholders, including family members, to share findings and make information requests. It is clear that the information that people are able to share

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*I also have had no  
hesitation in recommending  
the LD forum to others.*

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saves a huge amount of time for people in a range of professional roles, making them extremely cost-effective. Moreover both professionals and family carers use these networks to get up to date and accurate information which ultimately leads to better resources and support for people with learning disabilities.

**Anna Marriott**

**Research Fellow, Norah Fry Research Centre,  
University of Bristol**

Dear Janet

I was hoping the threat to you had passed, but clearly not. I have to say your service is invaluable and it would be tragic if funding forced you to withdraw. Where and how else can learning disability practitioners and others interested share information, raise important questions and actually address some fundamental gaps in the training of some employed in the field? I don't know how many subscribers you have, but just a simple sum would suggest that the per capita cost is tiny, and quite disproportionate to the value you provide. I really don't know how I could carry on without it.

I have a question for you. What evidence do you have that the list serves can meet the needs of researchers to undertake a reasonably comprehensive study of projects relating to topics like friendship or social inclusion, in order to identify suitable 'case study' sites for more detailed research? I have, of course, a vested interest in asking this question, however I think it may also be the sort of evidence that might impress funders.

With very best wishes

**Jan Walmsley**

**Jan Walmsley Associates Ltd.**

I believe that the UK Health and Learning Disability Network is an essential resource for both UK academics and practitioners in the field of learning disabilities alike. It enables a varied and disparate group of workers to communicate effectively and keep each other updated as to what is happening - it enables colleagues to seek expert advice almost instantly. For example I have recently been asked by Channel 4 to assist with some investigative work concerning the use of psychotropic medicines in children with learning disabilities - I cannot really help but the UK network provides a medium for exchange of information that will assist this reporter. I have personally used the UK network to assist me with research into workforce issues in the last 12 months, and without it I would not have been able to obtain the data I so badly needed. It would be disastrous if we were to lose this invaluable resource

**Professor Bob Gates**

**Academic and Professional Lead for Learning Disabilities University of Hertfordshire and Visiting Professor of Learning Disabilities for the University of West London**

The health and learning disability network is an essential source of intelligence and networking on issues which were widely overlooked in the health service until 'Death by Indifference' and the subsequent inquiry and ombudsmen's reports. As national government gives up on the task of ensuring improvements in the delivery of quality services for people with learning disabilities and expects more to be done by families and professionals working locally, this kind of network is just the sort of infrastructure they will need to do so.

**Jim Mansell**

**Emeritus Professor of Learning Disability,  
Tizard Centre, University of Kent at  
Canterbury**

My experience of the network has been entirely positive. As a university lecturer in Learning Disability Nursing, it helps me to stay abreast of issues in terms of policy, practice and legal/ethical issues. I encourage students to become part of the network and the information provided through the network helps them to access current opinions and issues.

**Pat Talbot**  
*Chester University*

Dear Janet

I find the network an invaluable forum for sharing information and good practice in learning disability. It keeps me abreast of what is happening nationally and many of the excellent resources that members share have helped me to inform my students in the classroom, as well as in practice. We get to know about new initiatives, legislation and reports.

It does a fantastic job and long may it continue.

**Dr Marie E. Gressmann**  
*Senior Lecturer, School of Health and Social Care, University of Teesside*

Janet, this network has proved to be extremely beneficial to me in many ways since its conception, and importantly, through my use of it, an extreme benefit to the care delivery for people with learning disabilities and their families/carers. The network has enabled me to share areas of good practice and compare and contrast notes with my professional peer group. This has also been of benefit to student nurses in the field of RN(LD). Not only does it provide an on-line forum which enables best practice and advice/support to be shared across the network, but it also enables one to one face telephone and face to face contacts too. It provides a unique database of resources, where one can mail out a question and receive a multitude of valuable responses. Without the network, I fear that once again, LD nurses would be left isolated with few

opportunities to receive the support they often require at the press of a button.

**Steve Neville-Wu MA, DipN, RN(LD),  
PGCert**  
*Senior Lecturer - Learning Disability Nursing,  
University of Wolverhampton*

The UK health and Learning Disability Network is of vital importance to professional's working in both health and learning disability. The network shares vital information to a very wide range of colleagues swiftly and efficiently. It also supports colleagues in collecting information, locating resources and sharing positive practice. It has supported the Working Together with Parents Network in disseminating its services to a far wider audience.

**Beth Tarleton**  
*Research Fellow, Norah Fry Research Centre,  
University of Bristol /Co-ordinator of the  
Working Together with Parents Network*

I am writing to confirm and add my support to the work undertaken through the "UK health and Learning Disability Network".

Since its inception this network has grown from strength to strength and constitutes a unique and invaluable resource for sharing across the learning disability professional communities. The network has represented a vital vehicle for exchange of information, opinion, ideas, collaborative working opportunities and the furtherance of good practice. To lose such a resource, if the financial constraints threaten this, would not just be a retrograde event but potentially lead to a significant chasm in enabling the lives of people with learning disabilities to be enhanced in the manner in which government past and present has committed itself.

It is just unthinkable to conceive that the network will not only continue but flourish further.

**David Weinrabe**  
*Principal Lecturer*

This network is essential and its future must not be in doubt. With Janet's help we share information to help us work with some of the most vulnerable people in society. A civilised and decent nation cares for its less able citizens. At a time when funding is being cut it is vital not to lose the tools to help us to work together to develop creative responses to the challenges we face.

**Sue Hart**  
**University of Surrey**

This network is central to so many new and exciting pieces of evidence from people based in many organisations statutory agencies and the NHS as well as the private, voluntary and independent sectors. Without this network we would have so much more work to do, this is one way in which we are able to share valuable informative work to offer support to individuals with a learning disability. It is crucial to the care they receive and provides a huge potential network for the gathering of information, material, stats and evidence. Many practitioners are working independently or in isolated circumstances and this for them is a fantastic way of keeping in touch and being able to develop further.

I co run a national network for learning disability students called Positive Choices and they all use this as a source of evidence for now and in the future the value of this is just huge to them and the people they support now and in the future.

**Jo Welch**  
**Senior Lecturer in Learning Disability**  
**Nursing/Chair Positive Choices 2011,**  
**University of Hertfordshire**

Hello Janet,

My name is Debra Shanley I work in the further education sector so use your website to keep my knowledge up-to-date.

If this network were to be delisted it would be a catastrophe.

**Debra Shanley**

I find this network invaluable. as an academic it helps me keep up to date with things from the grass roots that would be very difficult to get access to. I have used the network for network to undertake academic articles and research. it is also a very useful place to keep up to date with the myriad of current events .

**Neville Parkes, MSc, BSc Pgce( HE)**  
**RN(LD) Fellow of the Higher Education**  
**Academy**  
**Senior Lecturer, Institute of Health and**  
**Society,University of Worcester**

Dear Janet,

I will be very happy to let you have evidence from my PhD research as to the value of the network to health facilitators struggling to gain access to generic services for people with learning disabilities.

My research demonstrated clearly that the Network was valued by all participants interviewed and, in many cases, the only means of support and direction available. I will work on extracting some of the participant's' testimonies for you and let you have it early next week.

In response to requests made via the network for research findings to be made public, I was wondering if I could post my research abstract via the network with an option for interested parties to request the research in full.

**Dr. Glynis Whitehead**

Dear Janet

The material that is carried on this site is invaluable to me both as a practitioner and as an educator. The variety of content, timeliness and client centred nature of the material is particularly useful. It is difficult to find another source that is as comprehensive and topical in nature. It provides a rich evidence source for those with learning disabilities, their families and carers.

**Peter Griffin**  
**Discipline Lead, Learning Disability**  
**programmes**

When asked by my nursing students( from learning disability, mental health and adult fields of practice ) about policy, guidelines, professional, clinical, or human issues relating to learning disability care I have no hesitation in directing them to the UK Health and Learning Disability Network. This free resource is a valuable and irreplaceable forum where those committed to all things learning disability can deepen their understanding of contemporary key issues and advise fellow carers about advances in knowledge and skills. The network provides a safe learning environment where the needs of people with learning disability are placed first . It has an exemplary capacity to keep abreast of latest developments and helps shape policy and practice in health and social care for this vulnerable group. I heartily recommend the forum to any one who has an interest in learning disability care.

**Pat Bradley (RNLD)**  
*Director of Policy and External Relations,  
School of Nursing, Midwifery & Health,  
University of Stirling*

Dear Janet,

I just wanted to highlight the impact that the UK Health and Learning Disability Network has had. I am a member of many practice networks, but I have not come across one that has the consistent engagement of so many practitioners. The network has the widest content discussion I have come across. Many practitioners are sharing materials for use with and for people with learning disabilities that they work with, providing what seems to be a very effective clearing house for good practice from the front-line- a place where it is notoriously difficult and expensive to gather information and an overview. The content also constantly draws the attention of its users to new policies, guidelines, discussion documents and good practice materials that are being introduced. A practitioner may monitor the network and have at least an overview of what is coming along of relevance to similar professionals and have an opportunity to find this on the the web.

There are many examples in the network of topics being raised that then draw many other requests for the same information. In this way the network provides a resource for gauging issues of importance for further practice development. There are also examples of requests being made for participants in research and the network is therefore a resource to the wider research community.

**Stephen Beyer PhD**  
*Cardiff University*

I am writing to give support to your current endeavours to secure funding for the continuation of the UK Health and Disability Network. At a personal level I find the information this service provides extremely useful in gaining a better understanding of practice concerns across the UK, in establishing contacts and also in disseminating information concerning local projects. I also know from my colleagues and students that they likewise find this an extremely valuable service. I do hope that you are able to secure further funding – if I can be of any assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Ruth Northway**  
*Professor of Learning Disability Nursing,  
University of Glamorgan*

I find the UK Health and Learning Disability Network a very useful space for distributing information about current events, exchanging knowledge, and contacting practitioners/carers/researchers working in the area. As a researcher, thanks to the network, I managed to distribute information about a national research project I'm working on what resulted in great feedback.

**Dr Olga Kozłowska**  
*Research assistant in the Centre for Health  
and Social Care Improvement, School of  
Health and Wellbeing, University of  
Wolverhampton*

I am writing to say how useful the UK Health Network is to me in my role as researcher. I have used the network for many years in a number of different ways such as finding out about published and unpublished work which is relevant to research projects I am working on, letting other people know about research I am working on and sharing research findings. I frequently forward relevant messages to colleagues and suggest that they join the Network. The Network is a good way to have contact with people working in the learning disability field nationally and an excellent way to share good practice and find out about other work and events - I cannot think of any other existing way of doing this. It is an invaluable resource.

***Melanie Chapman Research Associate,  
Manchester Learning Disability Partnership***

Absolutely delighted to write in support of the forum. The role it fulfils is utterly vital in providing a means for disseminating and sharing information around best practice across the whole of the UK.

***Dr Brodie Paterson PhD., M.Ed., BA(Hon),  
Dip Nursing, FEANS. Senior Lecturer,  
Department of Nursing and Midwifery,  
University of Stirling***

## Charity

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Staff at Epilepsy Society are registered with both the UK Health and Learning Disability Network, and the UK Epilepsy Network. We highly value the networks because they keep us up to date with current issues and practice, help us stay in touch with healthcare professionals, add the perspective of a voluntary organisation, and allow us to offer information about our work and resources. All these aspects inform our work and help us support as many people with epilepsy, and professionals, as we can.

***Stella Pearson***  
***Epilepsy Information Officer, Epilepsy Society***

Dear Janet

I have been meaning to write to you for several years to thank you for your tireless work on the network bulletins. Part of my job role is to prepare a bulletin for our members (more than 200 learning disability service managers) and I am able to glean very useful pieces of information from your bulletin (that are just not available anywhere else) to be circulated on to those members. As a central point of information on a wide range of issues relating to the health and wellbeing of people with learning disabilities it really can't be beaten!

***Mandy Tilston-Viney***  
***Information Service, Association for Real Change***

I want to reinforce the positive impact and usefulness of the UK Health and Learning Disability Network. Together with my staff team at BILD, I find the Network an invaluable source of up to date information. It is particularly good at connecting practitioners to best practice and helping identify concerns and challenges in delivering person centred support.

***Kevin Smith***  
***Chief Executive, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD)***

I and my colleagues in DSA's Information Team find the UK health and Learning Disability Network to be a unique and invaluable source of information, advice and support. I am not sure what we would do without the network!

***Stuart Mills***  
***Information Officer, Down's Syndrome Association***

I have been researching and gathering information in order to start a project developing easy read materials about prostate cancer. The UK Health and Learning Disability has been absolutely vital for me in keeping up to date with information about learning disabilities in general. More specifically it has enabled me to network with professionals who have expertise in this area, and gather evidence that will help in the development of the easy read materials. Recently, I have also been able to share some initial materials I developed with health professionals using the network and I had feedback that this enabled them to do their work more effectively. Without the expertise, information and contacts I have gathered via the network it would have been really hard for me to get the project underway.

***Anneliese Levy***  
***Information Officer, The Prostate Cancer Charity***

The Williton Signers are a very small charity who design and provide communication resources for children and adults with communication needs. Having exhausted our local areas we were recommended to join the UK Health & Learning Disability Network described to us as a busy thoroughfare of information exchange and the 'place to be'. By doing so we were able to join the bigger arena so that people on a wider scale could know of our work. It also added to our 'street cred' that such a professional body of people were accepting of our services and valued what we did. By becoming part of 'their loop' we have also been able to keep updated about existing needs as well as finding out

about shortfalls in resources so that whenever possible we have been able to target the design of any new resources appropriately. There is no doubt that we have benefitted from establishing a real link into current issues and needs concerning those individuals and other workers supporting those individuals with Learning Disabilities

*Williton Signers*

I would like to register my support for the continuation of the UK Health and Learning Disability Network. It is a key tool in ensuring that small grass roots organisation that directly support and represent people with learning disabilities are able to keep abreast of current issues and effectively ensure that people with learning disabilities are fully included in the development of genuinely inclusive health strategies. The network is also invaluable in the way it allows professionals from many different disciplines, carers and advocacy organisations to share current good practice and make one another aware of useful resources and initiatives. It would be a great loss not to have access to such a network, I hope that you are able to secure future funding.

*Karen Harris Accessible Information  
Manager, CHANGE*

## Clinical

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Over the years that I have been a member of this LD Health Network I could give multiple examples of how the network has made a positive impact on direct care to people with learning disabilities. The sharing of information has saved time and valuable resources in preventing duplication. Personal knowledge and practice approaches have been shared in a wide variety of topic areas directly benefiting people with learning disabilities, carers, paid staff and a wide range of national organisations. The LD Network is the envy of other practice specialities and is increasingly used as an information hub.

In this current climate, it would seem there is no time more important to be arguing the need for something as efficient and cost effective as this network. The potential demise of the network would leave a gaping hole that would be difficult to ever replace.

**Lesley Russ**  
**Public Health Specialist**  
**(Learning Difficulties),**  
**NHS Bristol**

Dear Janet

I have been using the network since I was a student in 2005. It has kept me abreast of new policy, legislation and evidence based practice. This has translated into better service provision for the people that I work with. To name at least two examples, the Network has connected me with other practitioners in learning disabilities with a special interest in Dementia. We have been meeting as a group for more than a year now. The group has contributed to the development of a clear Dementia Care Pathway for people in our service. We have also begun to use more suitable assessments since I began attending the forum. My second example is related to End of Life Care for People with Learning Disabilities. Through the network I came to know about at least two end of life care conferences for our client group. The conferences provided me with the

knowledge to co-ordinate an end of life care special interest group within our team. To date we are working on the final draft of an end of life care pathway for people in our service.

I am more than happy to provide more examples of how the LD Health Network has been of tremendous use to me. Please feel free to contact me on the details provided below.

Thanks and regards

**Patience Udonsi**  
**Adult Learning Disability Nurse, Pennine Care**  
**NHS Foundation Trust**

Dear Janet,

I have been working as a liaison nurse for three and a half years now and I find the information on the LD nurses network extremely useful to the work I do.

It keeps me up to date with current best practice, allows me to network with nurses doing similar work and informs me of forthcoming conferences etc. It is also very useful for asking advice from others who may have experienced similar difficulties with regards to accessing information or services for people with learning disabilities.

It would be a great shame to lose this valuable resource.

**Karen Clark**  
**Primary Care Liaison Nurse**

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*It would be a great shame to lose this valuable resource.*

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The LD forum provides an opportunity for professionals and carers to share resources and to keep abreast of what is happening in the wider learning disability arena. The fact that it is open to carers and professionals means that both parties can have frank and open discussion / debate / sharing of information and advice and for these purposes alone, it is a valuable resource.

**Jackie Howe**

**Learning Disabilities Primary Health Liaison Nurse,**

The network is one of the first places I will go to if I need any information, I have used it on many occasions and I have always had a good response, it serves as best practice within our department

**Tracy Anderson**

**Community Learning Disability Nurse**

I have used this network for a few years now and have found the two way sharing of information invaluable in my work, both when I was a Community Learning Disability Nurse and now as Head of Safeguarding Adults. The sharing of knowledge, ideas, advice and actual work has saved many hours of work in unnecessary duplication and has led to the creation of some innovative ideas which are then shared widely across the network. As non learning disability professionals are increasingly (and rightly) taking on roles which include the remit of supporting people with learning disabilities, I have been able to give them the network details for them to join in order to them to obtain this information and support for themselves.

**Anna Gleadell**

**Head of Safeguarding Adults, NHS North East Essex**

Dear Janet,

Good luck...

My nursing role is not wholly related to Learning Disability, however my work brings me into contact with people with a LD and I have found the network invaluable to understand the issues that may be around for a young person an liaise more effectively with other carers and professionals working with the person.

It has also provided me with information that I have used to support the health and wellbeing of young people in care with the added needs associated with LD.

It provides an effective means of communication between geographically and professionally diverse groups - and is very time (therefore cost) efficient.

**Ruth White**

**Children in Care Nurse, Integrated Childrens Services, NHS Devon**

I work with people with learning disabilities, family carers, and a range of statutory, private and third sector organisations supporting them.

I find the learning disability network a very useful source of:

- Information about government policy, guidance and legislation.
- Good practice in a wide range of areas

It is a means where I can "plug in to" a network of people working in the field and learn from their successes and mistakes

This is not mere "academic" information, but a priceless resource that enables me to help improve services and support, and thereby improve the lives of people with learning disabilities.

**Dr Peter Taylor**

I find the LD forum to be an excellent resource.

As a parent and a professional, it keeps me updated with the latest research, articles and opinions and is a great place for problem solving through reading posts/requests from other forum members that are often similar to situations that I may deal with in my work.

As an independent practitioner it is particularly useful to me as I find out about legislation and information for further reading to keep me up to date that I would otherwise not have known or had the time to sit down and look for.

In some of my work, I work as part of a team and there are several of the notifications that come through that I can pass on to other professionals at my place of work and within the multi disciplinary team. I have posted on the forum myself when we came across someone and we were really 'stumped' for where to go next with him. The ideas that I received were really helpful and one response in particular helped us to focus on a completely different element that we hadn't thought of. So the forum is not only beneficial to the members but also to those that we work and live with.

I also find out about courses related to my work and to my children – again, I probably would have missed them otherwise.

**Jayne Foxley**

***Independent Speech and Language Therapist,  
Parent – two children with additional needs***

The network has provided me with a wealth of information, resources, and opportunities to seek advice and ideas from others for the three and a half years I have been in post. I often search the archives of the network as part of research into existing or new projects I am working on - this enables me to make contact with others working on similar projects to seek often invaluable support and guidance, and often means I don't need to start from scratch with each new piece of work I undertake.

I frequently forward on e-mails & information received from the network to my colleagues here at learning disability services, and sometimes to colleagues in wider health and social care services.

Janet herself is also a fantastic source of help and support, I don't think there has been a request I have made to the network yet that Janet hasn't also made an individual contribution to in responding.

In short, my work is regularly strengthened by the support and knowledge of a network of professionals who I would not otherwise have the opportunity to make contact with and benefit from.

**Natalie Winterton**

***Health Facilitator, Brighton & Hove  
Community Learning Disability Team***

Dear Janet

I am writing to voice my support for the Learning Disability Health network and my concern that funding restrictions may result in its loss.

I find the network invaluable in terms of finding out about information, sharing resources and keeping up to date. Without it I would find it impossible to source all of the information that is shared and this would have a big impact on both my knowledge base and my ability to apply it to my working practice. To cut this network would actually incur greater costs in terms of other people's time as it would take considerably longer to source information and I don't know how we would easily share good practice without it.

**Meryl Young**

***Head of SLT, Dietetics and Dysphagia,  
Wandsworth Community Learning Disability  
Team***

I have only been using the UK Health and Learning Disabilities Network since the beginning of the year, but it has already proved to be a vital aid for me in my new post. I have been able to search the archives for information which has helped immensely as I have adapted to my new role. The ability to look up answers to some of the regularly asked questions that I am coming across has been invaluable and continued to ensure that my work practice remains evidence based. I have also been able to network with other Health/Hospital Access/ Acute Liaison nurses who have helped me to overcome some stumbling blocks and to be reassured that we are not the only area that is struggling with some of this work! I work in a rural area and there are not the opportunities to 'network' in real life so the Network has played a vital role in ensuring that I do not feel quite so isolated.

Thanks Janet, you're a star!

***Denise Polhill***

***Health Access Nurse for People with a Learning Disability, Royal Shrewsbury Hospital***

I have used this network for a number of years, in this current climate with everyone under pressure to do more in the time they have I have found the network invaluable. The service has a very positive effect on client care because you can save yourself immeasurable time researching for various information as usually someone on the network has some information on the topic you need. I have used it both to give and receive information, and to correspond to various individuals who are having the same difficulties to talk through problems, without the network I would never have found these individuals or be able to share problems and information

***Yvonne Ward***

***Community Nurse PLD, Learning Disabilities Service***

I qualified in 2009 as a registered learning disability nurse. I have been a member of the network since starting my undergraduate training in 2006. Throughout my time as a student and since qualifying I have used the network to network with other learning disability professionals. As the field of learning disability is relatively small in comparison to other branches of health care such a network is vital in order for us like minded professionals to network and share good practice. The sharing of good practice is a key component of the UK health and Learning Disability Network. It is widely recognised that people with learning disabilities experience greater health complaints / inequalities in health compared to the rest of the population therefore the network further aims to promote the health of people with learning disabilities and support mainstream services in responding to the needs. I have used the network on numerous occasions, and it is highly beneficial in improving the care that I provide to the people I look after. It is a fantastic resource which is very much needed within the learning disability field as it brings together professionals who are interested in improving the health of people with learning disabilities.

***Carla Whittake Bsc(Hons) RNLD***

***Nurse Practitioner***

My job title is Coming Home Coordinator and I work to develop services in county for adults who have been placed out of county.

I find the learning disability network invaluable in my work. It keeps me updated about government policy, new developments, and current issues. It provides opportunities to share experience and knowledge and allows requests for information to be placed. It is an excellent peer resource. The information we in our team find useful can be disseminated throughout our department. It can also be passed on to independent providers - we work closely with local independent providers and have an email network we use to share knowledge etc.

I find the resource invaluable. Some examples of its use are learning about the ordinary residence issue, and currently i am receiving 3 months of free information from legal journals on social care, health and housing (via a link on your network). I hope that you will be able to continue your invaluable work as your services will be well missed.

**Marion Franklin**  
*Social Worker, Commissioning Department, County Durham*

I qualified in 2009 as a registered learning disability nurse. I have been a member of the network since starting my undergraduate training in 2006. Throughout my time as a student and since qualifying I have used the network to network with other learning disability professionals. As the field of learning disability is relatively small in comparison to other branches of health care such a network is vital in order for us like minded professionals to network and share good practice. The sharing of good practice is a key component of the UK health and Learning Disability Network. It is widely recognised that people with learning disabilities experience greater health complaints / inequalities in health compared to the rest of the population therefore the network further aims to promote the health of people with learning disabilities and support mainstream services in responding to the needs. I have used the network on numerous occasions, and it is highly beneficial in improving the care that I provide to the people I look after. It is a fantastic resource which is very much needed within the learning disability field as it brings together professionals who are interested in improving the health of people with learning disabilities.

**Carla Whittaker Bsc(Hons) RNLD**  
*Nurse Practitioner*

I'm sorry to hear the Learning Disability Health network is again under threat. The service has been hugely beneficial to me in my work through sharing good practice, making contacts with like minded professionals and a safe place to ask complex and difficult questions about individual cases. I know for

instance that through the sharing of the Gloucestershire Traffic Lights assessment that this has now been implemented and embedded in Medway Maritime Hospital and I used it tens of times to improve individual experiences.

More recently I have shared the MCA flow chart put together by Allyson Kent with the Safeguarding and MCA lead, which influencing some training that our hospital trust will be putting on soon.

I've also been enthusiastic to share work I or my organisation have been working on, from the Easy read menu project, along with the more recent RCN position statement on Learning Disability Nursing, and a discussion about evaluation of Patient Passports.

All these examples have had a direct impact on the care of people with learning disabilities.

I am unsure as to whether my organisation would contribute via a subscription, however I would be happy to pay a nominal some on a monthly basis.

**Daniel Marsden**  
*Practice Development Nurse for Patients with learning disabilities, William Harvey Hospital*

I have been a member of this network for over three years. In my experience it is a very useful source of up to date information. The network is often the first to disseminate relevant legislation. It is also where I hear about many training events and innovative service developments. In terms of clinical work, many members of the network are generous in sharing resources. This can be a great way of saving time and learning about the various tools and specialist services that are available. The network makes a vast amount of information easy to access and download, both from national and local agencies. New publications such as journals are promoted on the network, which again can be helpful in planning clinical work and providing the rationale for service developments. As network members come

from every region in the UK, as well as selected services abroad, it is an excellent way to find out whether equitable services are being provided for our clients. Sharing good practice is a key feature of the network, which reaches families, carers and professionals alike.

***Dr. Vicky Laute***  
***Chartered Clinical Psychologist***

I am writing to say how much I appreciate the support, information and feedback from the LD Forum.

As a learning disability nurse there are sometimes issues I need help with that my work colleagues cannot help me with. I know I can go to the forum and tap into the expertise that exists within the members!

The forum also keeps me up to date with new research / documents in supporting people with learning disabilities.

I find it an invaluable network resource and hope it continues.

***Sian Cripps***  
***Learning Disability Nurse***

I have been qualified since 2004, however prior to this I was aware of a variety of networks of the day. Although since qualifying I feel that the most beneficial to me as a clinician has been the LD health network. It is informative of all issues not just specific to clinical, it offers me an insight into the workings of other teams and services as well as enabling LD professionals to comment and offer support to one another. In times of austerity I feel that without this network there would be much less networking of professionals working within the field of learning disabilities, we are small in number but have a great deal to offer. This is why I am happy to support and continue to subscribe to this network.

***James Ridley***  
***Community Nurse, Liverpool Community Learning Disability Team***

I have used the network as a simple and practical network for discovering the flavour of opinion across the UK for many years. In particular Janet Cobb has a vast knowledge of the current LD health climate and shares her knowledge indiscriminately and generously. I feel we would be foolish to lose this resource as it has undoubtedly prevented the reinvention of the wheel, given a supportive lifeline to carers and helped to hold our community together in very trying times.

***Judith Johnson***  
***Health Facilitator***

I'm happy to support the case for the network continuing. I have worked in the field for around 40 years and have seen lots of changes. Many people now work in small teams and sometimes alone unlike in the past where there were much bigger groups. Working in the one of the more rural areas and with money being tight it is increasingly difficult to attend the seminars and events in London etc. I'm sure you understand it is a days journey plus to get to London from Devon. The network keeps a flow of newer ideas passing to the areas away from the centre. The scope is broader than a purely British one. I have also communicated with nurses from as far away as New Zealand and exchanged information with them; I would not have done this without the network.

I have used the network for passing on information, listening to what others are saying and also seeking the views of others on a whole range of topics. It is invaluable for exchanging information with a wide audience, not only of professionals but of parents and unqualified carers. The debates are lively and although I may not always agree with what has been said the exchange is stimulating. I think too the network provides a useful educational resource for new workers.

Anything which can be done to keep the network going must be encouraged.

***Mike Adams***  
***Community Nurse***

I am on maternity leave at present but am a senior LD physio and find the network a great way to stay in touch with what is going on and link into people. I would be extremely sad to see it go as there is so little available for this clinical area of expertise and people can be so isolated.

**Sasha Pearce**  
**Senior LD Physio**

I have been a member of the network since its beginning and have found it to be an extremely useful resource. I have, over the years posted requests for information and ideas to help me in role of health facilitator. I have had responses which have been helpful.

I have used the network to both gain information to help me and have benefitted from other peoples ideas which I have used as evidence of good practice in making changes- e.g. hospital information that was developed to improve the care of people with learning disabilities that was shared on the network. I was able to take it to a hospital working group as a good example. We have used that as a starting point and made our own tool to help hospital staff.

The network is a very popular resource that seems to be growing judging by the number of emails I receive from it. If it were to go then I wonder how much time professionals would waste 'reinventing the wheel'. Which does not make sense in this climate when we are under a lot of pressure to take on more work. The network is an excellent starting point for projects and improvements in the health of people with learning disabilities.

I would be very disappointed to lose such a valuable resource.

**Linda Swann**  
**Health Facilitator**

I would like to share my comments on this Network. I have used the network on a number of occasions to ask for support for different issues which I've always had a

response to. My requests have ranged from accessible information to pathways/caseload management tools/policy development; to name but a few.

Through this network I have had the opportunity to liaise with professionals in other areas that I would not ordinarily have had the opportunity to network with which has been invaluable and sharing such work as job descriptions, eligibility criteria and other information is so useful.

In addition to the above, the way information is shared is excellent, there is always something that I can look at and find useful that a member has shared, which in these times of austerity is so helpful as often there is not the time and resources to work on everything.

I hope my comments are useful and go some way to showing how valuable this network is not only to professionals working in the field of learning disabilities, but also to other professionals, carers, families and others.

**Sandra Montisci**  
**Professional Head of Learning Disability Nursing/Community Matron in Barnsley, South Yorkshire**

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*The network is a very popular resource that seems to be growing judging by the number of emails I receive from it.*

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I have been a member of the UK Health and Learning Disability Network for several years. I have always found the network useful to keep up to date with national developments that influence the delivery of health care and as a forum for sharing good practice. In addition, a contact made through the network resulted in the opportunity to co author a published article for the Learning Disability Practice Journal. As a learning disability nurse currently working in a role outside of traditional learning disability services the network has been even more invaluable as a means to keep up to date with issues that influence the health and well being of people with learning disabilities.

***Sue Keoghan***

***Specialist Nurse Practitioner (Adult ADHD)***

I find the UK Health & Learning Disability Network incredibly useful as a means of sharing information that can be used to improve the health status of one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. In my role as a Liaison Nurse, I support my main-stream health colleagues to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities, and in order to do this it is vital that my knowledge and awareness of developments within the field is kept up to date. The network serves as a resource for linking in with other specialists in this area, and I am then able to disseminate this information throughout wider health and other networks within my geographical region.

***Samuel Edwards***

***Primary Care Liaison Nurse for Adults with a Learning Disability - Cornwall NHS***

I have been a very active user of the UK Health and learning disability Network for a number of years, sharing work that i have known about or being part of myself to prevent others 'reinventing the wheel'. I have also raised queries, asking for help from others, which has often seen responses from colleagues within hours. This network is unique as it brings together practice, professionals and carers from across the UK and beyond to resolve issues and learn together, one of the biggest ever communities

of practice which improves the health outcomes to people with learning disabilities. A fantastic resource to services for people with learning disabilities that cannot be lost.

***Allyson Kent***

***Deputy Head of Nursing, Policy and Practice, Humber NHS Foundation Trust, Chair A2A Network***

I just wanted to add my support for the network I work in a busy forensic community service and I find it a very useful resource. It enables me to network with LD professionals across the country and sometimes further afield. Not all the topics of interest are relevant to me but I would say that there is at least one item a week that is of direct relevance to my work. I am also a member of the forensic LD network and find this particularly useful. The email nature of the network means I can respond directly to others when queries arise and I and other team members have posted requests for information that have been responded to quickly and effectively.

***Wendy Goodman***

***Forensic Senior Nurse, Avon Forensic CLDT***

Since signing up last year I have found the Health and Learning Disability Network to be an invaluable source of information and resources which have been really useful in my work as a community learning disability nurse. I find it helpful as a means of keeping up to date and finding out about practice in other parts of the country. It has helped me to find suitable easy read resources and is very supportive for all of us working in learning disability services.

***Anthony Potts***

***Community Nurse, Specialist Health Team for Adults with Learning Disabilities***

The network is an invaluable resource which I utilise on a regular basis, it provides a forum to share good practice, make requests for help and information and highlights learning disability issues. Personally the network saves me considerable time and avoids duplication. I use it to provide evidence which is always timely and relevant. I always recommend the network to new workers and students.

***Michaela Hopps***

***Team Lead- Health Facilitation Service Co Durham and Darlington***

This network has proved to be a valuable source of clinical information and support for clinicians working in learning disability healthcare. There are so many excellent initiatives going on locally and nationally that would not get an airing if this network was not available – I have personally used this network on many occasions to pass on information to learn about current issues and to keep abreast of practice – in a service that is full of competing information this network helps to keep me ‘in the loop’ and provides an excellent opportunity to see what else is going on across the country. I fully support any efforts to continue this service.

***Phil Goldblatt***

***Consultant Clinical Psychologist,  
Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS  
Foundation Trust***

I am writing to support the future of the UK Health and Learning Disability Network. I find this network one of the most useful and effective ways of keeping up to date with new developments within ALD. In particular I often find that I am aware of new publications more quickly than other members of my team because I have been alerted to them via the network.

The network has also saved us huge amounts of clinical time through the sharing of resources developed in other regions - there is no need to "reinvent the wheel" when others are willing to share work they have already done which can then be adapted to fit your service.

The network is an excellent way of ensuring we meet our CPD requirements in a cost-effective way (through learning from posts) as well as being a way of finding out about courses and events which are running throughout the UK.

I strongly support the need for this network and hope sincerely that it can continue.

***Rebecca Thompson***

***Highly Specialist Speech and Language  
Therapist working with Adults with a  
Learning Disability (ALD)***

Continuing healthcare funding (CHC) and learning disabilities is a very isolated world. I have made many contacts (and met up ) with other professionals in this field, through the Network. I have also found other useful articles and links to publications on best practice. I have disseminated these valuable publications to other professionals within Kent. For example, best practice guide in Dementia and Learning Disabilities, I sent on to Director of Nursing in the PCT. She ensured GP's were aware of this information to ensure people with learning disabilities received appropriate dementia medication. I send all the transition documents to the transition champions in health and social care. The document around feeding for people who are end of life , I have sent to small nursing/residential homes. Feeding at end of life is a very emotional and difficult subject. I have referred to this document countless times with other professionals when a person with a learning disability is nearing end of life. The network is not only interesting but a valuable resource. Often it is assumed all this information is readily and easily available, however this is not always the case.

***Cathy Caine***

***Continuing Health Care Lead (LD)***

I have been a member of the site, virtually from its start! As a community nurse (LD) for 22 years it has been at the for front of being able to keep up to date, ask for information and share good practice and avoid reinventing the wheel, Janet and her team are fantastic in the wealth of information that they store and are able to give to people.

As an epilepsy specialist nurse I need to keep up to date with all things in the LD epilepsy field and the site enables me to do so.

It MUST keep going!

*Pam Iddon*

*Epilepsy Specialist Nurse, NHS Manchester*

The Learning disability health network has seen me through a degree and my career, having a young family finding the information quickly or having direction where to find the information has been a blessing.

This has helped me daily many times, I have prompted students as well as fellow colleagues to join and access the site for this reason.

I have felt at times when questions raised are isolated until joining the forum, similar questions are proposed all over the country enabling professionals to work together and not repeat care and ideas that have worked historically and obtain the data almost instantly.

*Karen Rowley (RNLD)*

*Specialist School Nurse*

The Network is an essential part of my work. It keeps me up to date with issues around learning disabilities in general but more specifically provides insight around issues directly connected to my position. For example largely as a result of the network, we have collected easy access information on a variety of health related topics and our library extends to over 700 items. Where else would we be able to share such valuable information?

*George Badiali*

*Senior Acute Liaison Learning Disability Nurse for Nottingham University Hospitals Trust*

I would just like to share my experience of UK health and Learning Disability Network. I have been a member of the network since its start. In busy and increasingly pressured working lives it is all too easy to become professionally isolated, both in terms of our individual disciplines and our localities. Finding time to keep up to date is increasingly difficult. Membership of the network allows me an opportunity through just observing conversations and enquiries to think about some of the current trends and issues across the field of learning disability professions. I have also used the network judiciously to make enquiries about particular practice issues, to share and develop good practice and problem solve. This is often an efficient way of working as sharing existing resources and pathways found rather than re-inventing the wheel. It is a simple and economic way to network and would be a shame if we lost it.

*Jan Howard*

*Community Learning Disability Nursing, Team Leader*

I joined the network around 3 and a half years ago, and have received a wealth of information from its members. This includes people sharing easy read information, research, ideas and good practice as well as all the advice given for specific requests for support. If I am unable to find what I wanted in a "Google search", I would look to the network for help.

I hope you can continue to provide this service for us so that we can continue to help each other across the country and the international community!

**Alison Kargbo**  
*Health & Wellbeing Co-ordinator, Community Learning Disabilities Team, North East Lincolnshire NHS*

From my experience the network is an invaluable resource for families, carers and professionals in sharing examples of good practice and networking/ sharing often common difficulties in a relatively 'small' (compared to just mental health or generic services) population of people dedicated to improve the well being of individuals with a learning disability. Personally since joining the network I have been amazed by the wealth and diversity of information people are prepared to share that has a positive outcome in terms of improving clinical practice and being able to share this with my colleagues in local practice.

**Russell Woolgar**  
*Learning Disability Outreach Team manager: Leicestershire, Partnership NHS Trust. Chair: East Midlands Learning Disability Nurse Network*

I am a community nurse working in a severe challenging behaviour community team,

I use the network all the time in my working life, to ensure my evidence base it up to date, to seek information to stop the duplication of work when people gives theirs freely.

It has been invaluable for ensure I remain within best practise, an recent example of this is evidence and literate on positive behavioural support.

The network ensure we remain up to day date with mental capacity act information and the changes proposed in the NHS.

I have used to network to gain information on accessing appropriate services for people and often refer colleagues to it when seeking information

**Ann Menzer**  
*Community nurse, Severe challenging behaviour team, Leeds PFT*

I find the network emails extremely useful in gathering information and networking for my role. I have been able to access courses as a result my contact with the network that would probably have not been known to me. When I first began this role the network was instrumental in me being able to gather information that meant I am better prepared and informed. Other professionals have been able to contact me with similar roles and we have met to share information and support.

I find the network a very useful tool in my role.

**Karen Somers**  
*Health Facilitator*

The network has been invaluable to me in my work. It has helped me find out what other people across the country are doing specifically around turning national directives into local policy, procedures, guidelines etc. It has helped me network with other people all over the country who have similar work issues and helped solve these.

Some specific areas it has helped with are health action plans, dementia awareness, accessible information around mental health issues.

Needless to say I would have been able to have found the information without the network, however this would have been time intensive and taken a lot more time than posting a question on the network.

**Christina Sosseh RNMH, BA(Hons)**  
*Community Nurse*

I am writing to support ongoing funding for the UK health and Learning Disability Network.

I have been accessing the information provided by this network over a number of years, and have found it to be an extremely useful source of information from professionals and carers who support and care for people with learning disabilities. In particular, it provides quick and easy access to discussion and ideas relating a wide range of current issues - an invaluable aid for very busy clinicians to keep abreast of current good practice and share problem solving with others in this field.

As a most recent example, I have been made aware of oral health guidelines for people who are PEG fed, and will now share these with other members of the learning disability team; with an aim to improve our oral health management for this client group.

***Urszula Coghlan***  
***Speech & Language Therapist, Community Learning Disability Team***

I find the network absolutely vital to my work as a community nurse working with adults with learning disabilities. There is no better source of information than the huge number of committed front line staff working in the field and this network makes all that expertise available to me with a click of the mouse - if I have a need for information or advice I can be sure that someone in the network will have already come across a similar situation and is able to help out. The benefit to the people we work with and to the service we provide is immeasurable. There is no way to measure the financial savings in terms of time saved through not reinventing the wheel and finding information that is not easily Googled.

To lose this network would be a backward step that would reduce the effectiveness of learning disability nurses

***Peter Old***  
***Community Learning Disability Nurse, NHS Borders***

Please accept this message as a note of my support. As a learning disability nurse your network is invaluable because it is a forum where any question can be raised and responses from across the national or even international community can be gained. The archives are excellent too, and we often search these when a piece of work crops up. I find that government initiatives do not get explored as thoroughly as we would like within the work team, but there are discussions and comments on the network that are really helpful to feed into local discussions. I also encourage student nurses to use the network it is an invaluable resource for learning at any stage of professional life, but many of the students I know who have used the network have been enabled to make links or develop innovative ideas for improving practice.

I sincerely hope the network is maintained, it will be a massive loss and the cost to people with learning disabilities will be huge.

***Joy Howe***  
***Community Nurse Practitioner***

The UK Health & Learning Disability network has been an absolute 'godsend' to anyone working in the field of health and learning disabilities. There is no other network that can offer such a range of opinions, clinical information and news worthy items about our specialist subject. The time and effort it saves to many practitioners who share information and resources is priceless. I've often thought that Janet Cobb has deserved an award for creating and creating distributing such wisdom and creativity.

**Jackie Fleeman**

**Lead Strategic Health Facilitator for Adults with Learning Disabilities, Derbyshire Healthcare Foundation Trust**

The LD network is a fantastic resource, that is valuable to me as my role as a community Learning Disability Nurse. The network

enables me to share good practice. Seek support and advice, from colleagues around the country.

Without the network this would not be possible.

**Helen Curry**

**Community Learning Disability Nurse**

The UK health and learning disability network

is a valuable resource; it informs me of the latest research, papers, websites etc. in regard to people with a learning disability. It enables sharing of information with other LD health colleagues from around the country. I have used it to ask people on the network for advice and have had some very useful feedback. I pass information to my health colleagues at my place of work.

**Lyndsay Broomhead**

**Community Learning Disability Nurse, Derbyshire Community Health Services**

I would like to share my comments on this Network. I have used the network on a number of occasions to ask for support for different issues which I've always had a response to. My requests have ranged from accessible information to pathways/caseload management tools/policy development; to name but a few.

Through this network I have had the opportunity to liaise with professionals in other areas that I would not ordinarily have had the opportunity to network with which has been invaluable and sharing such work as job descriptions, eligibility criteria and other information is so useful.

In addition to the above, the way information is shared is excellent, there is always something that I can look at and find useful

that a member has shared, which is these times of austerity is so helpful as often there is not the time and resources to work on everything.

I hope my comments are useful and go some way to showing how valuable this network is not only to professionals working in

the field of learning disabilities, but also to other professionals, carers, families and others.

**Sandra Montisci**

**Professional Head of Learning Disability Nursing/Community Matron, Barnsley, South Yorkshire**

I work with adults who have Learning Disabilities and find the network extremely useful. It gives us all working within the field of adult learning disabilities the opportunity to share information such as protocols, new up to date evidence and easy read formats that is essential for working within our client group. It has been a great format for me to liaise with other colleagues within my remit. The information on Conferences and literature available is also beneficial.

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**Susan Cockburn**  
*Nutritional Practitioner/Health Facilitation,  
TEWV NHS Trust*

I wanted to add my voice to what I am sure is the multitude of grateful voices in support of the network. It offers such a beneficial place where we as professionals in the area can safely ask questions and seek opinion from those in the field. We are not always reinventing the wheel. In a time of austerity where everything is about efficiency the small cost that is needed to run this is surely far outweighed by the time it would take so many people to reinvent work that may already have been done excellently elsewhere.

It is a place we can learn from and a place we can advertise learning. A place to share and a place to support each other when there is difficult issues that need to be addressed. This is facilitated and supported by the role you yourself undertake and for one I would not like to see it disappear.

**Dr Raja Mukherjee**  
*Consultant Psychiatrist for people with LD  
(Tandridge)*

I am currently a third year student learning disability nurse, I joined the network about a year ago. I have found it extremely useful when researching for assignments, especially my dissertation. The network has a wealth of knowledge and is one of the only places where professionals can share their knowledge and problem solve together. A large amount of nurses and other professionals use the network and nearly all queries are answered. It is also great for finding out new and up-to-date policy changes and training opportunities. Without this network I feel professionals will have nowhere to share their knowledge and skills, which in turn will affect the people who we are trying to help!!!

Thank you Janet keep up the hard work!

**Jayne Hunt**  
*Student Learning Disability Nurse at the  
University of York*

My role involves working with individuals with LD, health professionals, carers, etc., & the information sharing the network provides is an invaluable resource in supporting this role. It's a great resource for information & for networking with other professionals & other interested parties to share ideas. The sharing of information is how we grow & learn, thus I think it's vital that the network continues for the benefit of people with LD.

**Jonny Capes**  
*Health & Well Being Coordinator, Community  
Learning Disabilities Team, North East  
Lincolnshire NHS*

My name is Bryan Pierce and I work as a Learning Disabilities Practitioner within a Tier 3 Specialist CAMHS team. I have found the network a vital link in keeping up with legislation, news and training in, not only the broader topic of learning disabilities, but also more specialised areas within this group. I have accesses training advertised on the site, long before it has been advertised through other media. A much needed forum/network!

**Bryan Pierce**  
*Learning Disabilities Practitioner*

I would be lost without the network. I have had so much useful up to date information which has helped in my role as Health Facilitator. I use it on a daily basis. I have a file of accessible info which has come from the website and a file of saved info which is diverse in content but often used for my day to day work to benefit adults with a learning disability who have a variety of health needs. Without this website I would not have this information.

***Judith Barber***

***Health Facilitator - Hambleton & Richmondshire locality***

I have found this network most relevant to my work as Operational Manager for Learning Disability Nursing and Social Care services. More importantly it is used extensively by the frontline staff who provide services to people with a Learning Disability. The network provides an essential networking service allowing learning and sharing information on best practice throughout the four countries and beyond. In today's financial climate along with the drive for quality the network provides a means of accessing information, support and guidance for both senior managers and the staff who are delivering services in a timely fashion.

***Anne Campbell***

***Operations Manager, Learning Disability Service Group, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust***

I have been a member of this network for over five years, since Maurice Devine; alerted us here in Northern Ireland to it.

I have changed roles from CNLD to working as a behaviour therapist in primary schools and am now back as a residential nurse working with kids and young adults in a respite setting.

I have sought advice on many occasions in all job settings and feel that my practice has developed in many positive ways (for me, clients, families and colleagues). Being able to read about the excellent work that others are doing keeps me motivated in my own endeavours. I feel the network is an amazing, valuable resource that in my opinion should be supported especially in these financially difficult times.

***Barry Davey***

***Residential Nurse***

Since I took up the post of Equally Well Project Nurse (Learning Disabilities) in December 2010 I have found the UK Health and Learning Disability Network an invaluable source of support, information and resources. Although aligned to the All Age Disability Service, Orkney Islands Council, I am the only health care professional working specifically in the field of learning disability in the Orkney Isles. While I have close links with the specialist learning disability team in Grampian, on a day to day basis I am both geographically and professionally isolated. The UK Health and Learning Disability Network provides easy access to a wide body of knowledge and experience as well as practical support in the form of resources and tools such as easy read leaflets, good websites, links to research articles and other important documents.

The Equally Well project is time limited and having access to the network has meant that I have been able to assess and adapt various protocols, pathways and easy to read information developed in other health board areas or trusts to fit with the local context. By working in partnership with local colleges

from health and social care this process has been an easier and less time consuming process than starting from scratch. This means I am able to fulfil my aims and objective more readily than might otherwise have been possible. I have also requested help and found members of the network to be responsive and keen to share their work. One practical example is the Anticipatory Care Calendar developed by Merseyside and Cheshire Cancer Network. I first heard of this initiative through the network. Tracie Keats has now been to Orkney to deliver training around the calendar and we are about to pilot it in one of our supported houses. The evaluation of the training showed that the staff were positive about the training and the calendar and were keen to start the pilot. Had it not been for the network I may not have identified this useful and potentially lifesaving resource. It landed at my door without me having to spend time looking for it. This has often been my experience of the network.

*Dr Sandra Rodwell  
Equally Well Project Nurse (Learning disability), NHS Orkney*

The LD health network is an invaluable resource for all health professionals working in learning disability.

I have found its main benefits to be:

- Providing up to date information on legislation and policy
- Sharing research findings
- Drawing attention to and sharing local resources
- Discussion forum for difficult issues
- Sharing clinical expertise

As such, it can save clinicians a great deal of time and effort by raising awareness of work that is already completed and so saving repetition.

I rate the LD health network as my top CPD resource, and would find it very difficult to replace.

*Sharon Symon  
Senior Speech and Language Therapist, West Dunbarton Learning Disability Service*

I saw the recent request for testimonials regarding the usefulness of the network. I've been accessing the network for a fair number of years now, and over that time I've posted information requests on numerous occasions, linked to pieces of evaluation/information gathering work I've been doing for the Learning Disability Service I work within. The responses from network members have gone a long way to making those more credible exercises, with a greater potential to inform local service development. Keeping track of the discussions occurring across the forum has also been a great means of getting a sense of prevailing issues in relation to people with learning disabilities generally, as well as highlighting development avenues of relevance to other colleagues within the local LDS. The debate is always lively and informed, and in general provides an invaluable means of preventing that perennial NHS issue – the reinvention of the wheel.

Long may the network continue! And thank

you for all your hard work in keeping it running so smoothly.

***Dominic Jarrett***

***Research and Information Officer, Learning Disability Service, NHS Ayrshire and Arran***

Having been a clinician working in learning disability services for a number of years now I can recall the 'dark days' when it was very difficult to engage with colleagues or peers from other geographical areas across the United Kingdom.

The creation of this network and essentially the development of a robust and comprehensive 'community of practice' and 'managed knowledge network' has allowed me to approach a wide range of people on any health issue of interest and receive information about what other geographical areas are using or have tried to resolve the difficulty I have. In addition to this, since the network is delivered through the expert facilitation from someone who understands and is highly experienced in this field (Janet Cobb), there has been the opportunity to call upon a refined and comprehensive archiving of information obtained from across the UK on a wide range of practice issues. Without doubt this has been invaluable.

Off the top of my head the Network has assisted me, and I'm sure many others, enormously with the taking forward of issues relating to primary health care for people with learning disabilities; acute hospital provision to patients with these needs; training; challenging behaviour; transitions etc. The list is endless and all of which feature highly within many of the previous and current national drivers.

I would be deeply concerned about any moves to allow this network to fail and feel that to allow this to happen, especially in this financial climate, would be sheer folly and come back to haunt us all. In austere times surely it makes sense to have networks like this that for a relatively small sum of investment, allow people across public and private sectors to communicate in a way that

promotes best practices. Furthermore the current national drivers across the UK are inadvertently dependant on those who will have to implement them being able to communicate and network effectively. If unable to do this, quite simply services and regions will return to their respective professional or geographical silos; and bottom-up innovation and 'out of the box' thinking will suffer. However, those who will ultimately suffer most are the very people we are trying to provide best services and practices too.

***Robert A Macfarlane***

***Clinical Nurse Specialist***

I am currently managing an assessment and treatment unit for people with learning disability who are in crisis. I would like to affirm the benefit I have received in my professional practice by having access to the network. It often saves reinventing the wheel by sharing ideas and innovations and builds up very valuable contacts to help standardise national practices in helping people with learning disability lead more valued and fulfilled lives. It has a crucial part to play at this stage of the development of learning disability services, and it would be ironic at this time of innovation through technology if such a valuable network were lost.

***Helen Flanagan***

***BCUHB - Eleri A & T***

I am a learning disability nurse working as a practice development lead, the LD Network is really valued by most of our service. It has twofold benefits - It is an ideal way to both see what is going on in terms of good practice and ideas and to be able to share good practice and difficult issues. There is obviously still a lack of research evidence within our field, the network attracts people who have worked on a topic and who are in some cases national figures in our field to comment offering informal usually very practical evidence.

The other way the Network helps is the way workers in the field share their practice and ideas meaning there is less 're-inventing the wheel'.

This must be the largest forum for our field - it's instrumental in providing national and sometimes international networking.w

***Tracey Fynamore***

***Practice Development Nurse, Learning Disability Services, Leicester Frith Hospital***

The UK health and Learning Disability Network is a constant source of useful information and of informed and often provocative commentary. I find it invaluable in trying to keep up to date with health and social care policy development, and with service user and family carer experience from across the country. It benefits from being expertly facilitated, and being highly contemporary.

Long may it continue!

***Frank Earley***

***Joint Strategic Commissioner, Learning Disabilities***

I'm part of a new team that need as much info as we can get, its a very good way to see how others work. We as a team have gained lots of ideas of where/how others are working in different areas of the UK. It would be sad to see this forum closed as its good to share how we all work with people that needed our help, and would I feel mean spending more time looking for the info and less on the people we are trying to help.

***Glenn Landolfi***

***AST North Devon***

I am Dr. M. Kannabiran. I am a Consultant Psychiatrist, working in the field of Mental Health of Learning Disability, in the Kent and Medway NHS Trust.

I have a member of the network for the last 3 years. I find it a very useful way of keeping informed of developments which help improve care for people with learning disabilities.

It is helpful to professionals, but more importantly, this network plays an important role in connecting people with learning disabilities and their carers, with professionals working in the area, from around the world.

I sincerely wish that you and the network will be able to continue the very important work you do.

***Dr. Muthu Kannabiran***

***Consultant Psychiatrist Kent and Medway NHS***

I have recently returned to Community Nursing to undertake a Health Facilitation Role. I have only just joined the Network and found it invaluable, for sharing ideas, seeking advice, sharing experiences, improving ways of working, accessing resources and highlighting topics for further discussion within the team. It has also saved a lot of time.

***Liz Newport***

***Senior Community Nurse, Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust***

The Janet Cobb networks have been invaluable in the early development of the Learning Disabilities Public Health Observatory work. Quite simply they have provided a route for making people aware of work we have done in documenting health problems and healthcare use for people with learning disabilities. Announcements on the network of the publication of reports on our website are routinely followed by several hundred downloads of the report in about 24 hours.

The networks have many other uses which will be more apparent to people working directly in providing care, but as a picture of the effectiveness of the networks as a means to keep people who need to know in touch with new developments, this is an impressive level of effectiveness.

**Gyles Glover**  
*Co-Director Improving Health and Lives: Learning Disabilities Observatory*

Hi Janet,

I am emailing to express my gratitude to you, and the network as a whole. Since I began my studies in learning disability nursing in 2003 to the present day in my role as continuing healthcare facilitator I have found the network to be a most invaluable resource. I have used the network for many reasons, for example- to look for accessible information regarding health issues to share knowledge of conditions and treatment to network with others who share a similar role to research experiences of people with learning disabilities accessing specific services to identify relevant training

In every case, I have received invaluable information and made some very useful contacts. Without the network I would have spent many hours developing accessible information and researching subjects/issues which would have taken valuable time from my already busy schedule. As many who use

the network have said, why re-invent the wheel, if something useful is already out there it is a waste of precious time and resources to have to produce very similar pieces of work when the people who access the network are generally more than happy to share their good work.

I feel very strongly that this is a resource we cannot afford to lose, particularly in the current financial climate where resources are already stretched. I am sure that I am not only speaking for myself when I say that we ultimately subscribe to the network due to our desire to ensure the best outcomes for people with learning disabilities and the network plays a vital role in us achieving this goal.

**Debbie Firth**

*Continuing Healthcare Facilitator, A partnership between Manchester City Council and Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust*

Staff in the Manchester Learning Disability Partnership find the Idhealth network really useful. The work of the team I lead is project and

research based and so we often use the network to share information and findings, publicise our reports and ask for help and advice from colleagues around the country. The network also helps us to keep up to date with developments in our field that we can pass on to the services we work for. It's also useful for gauging how well we are doing in comparison to other areas. I'm sure that in this climate of cuts and job losses we will come to rely on the network even more as our authorities are no longer funding us to attend training courses and conferences - the only way to share knowledge, information and experiences will be via the network.

**Anna Fedeczko**  
*Senior Quality Development Officer, A Partnership between Manchester City*

**Council: Directorate for Adults and Central Manchester University Hospitals Foundation Trust**

Dear Janet,

The network is a great support to all people working in the learning disability sector, individuals with learning disabilities and their families and carers.

I have always found that there have been responses to any queries I have posted, and I have learned from others questions and answers. This is an excellent way to maintain and promote standards of care and inclusion of people with learning disabilities

**Kate Low**

**Senior Community Nurse, Manchester Learning Disability Partnership**

I have been part of this Network for quite sometime now and feel it is invaluable. It is a method of keeping up to date whilst sitting at your desk. Given an extra few minutes during the day at times I can read all pertinent information, and always learn something. I believe it is a safe and relevant method of asking colleagues (nationally) for assistance with an issue. Training courses and similar learning/sharing events are advertised regularly that we would not necessarily receive information about. I have responded to other professionals at times and the information shared both ways has always been extremely useful and applicable to my practice. I would not be able to do that without the Network facility. For learning disability professionals I believe that the Network is an essential element to good practice, and should continue long term as such. Thank you.

**Sue English**

**Community Nurse, Community Team Learning Disability**

To all network members.

Can I urge you all to show your support for this network by responding to Janet's request. I remember what it was like before the network started and we don't want to return to those dark days when networking was at best minimal and restricted to the few people that you knew in and around your region.

Please show your support.

**Robert Macfarlane**

**Clinical Nurse Specialist**

The UK Health and Learning Disability Network is an invaluable resource which supports the sharing of good practice and the development of improved, inclusive and person centred services for People with a Learning Disability. The information which can be shared on this network can save hours of work (therefore reducing costs) when developing resources or protocols (with the permission of the original authors) It also act as an informal peer audit tool by raising awareness of how areas are improving their services. This encourages development in other services across the country. Finally, the network is always there to contact when answers are needed to challenging situations either on an individual basis or of a service wide nature. It would be a great loss to the UK and wider if this network were no longer available.

**Anne Marie Hutchinson**

**Health Facilitation Coordinator, Sheffield Health and Social Care Trust**

I have been part of the network since it originally started and have found it a valuable resource not only as a networking site but also by providing information , hot off the press before it is generally known. The network also assists in improving practice of nurses and by the sharing of information regarding training opportunities. I have always encouraged nurses to join the network, who are busy and who find it difficult keeping their practice current particularly within the private sector. I would be lost without the network

and wouldn't mind having to pay a subscription fee for it to remain operational.

***Christine Dunn***

I am a deputy charge nurse working within a learning disabilities unit for people with challenging behaviour.

I have found the information gained from the UK health and learning disability network invaluable within my role. I have followed requests for information from other members and been included in replies. I have utilised some of the resources within my current practice and also within my training role. I have recommended the network to colleagues and they have also found this a valuable resource.

***Claire Reynolds***

***Deputy Charge Nurse, Lanchester Road Hospital***

I came into post 15 months ago and from the start found this site priceless. Why? I was able to ask what everyone else was doing throughout the country, look at aspects of best practice, develop on what others had achieved and therefore not reinventing the wheel, link up with others around joint development, it filled a large whole in my education around this area of work.

I also feel it could be used strategically better by national departments in identifying national co-ordination and need, from my area it would be the development of a national accessible information, e-learning particularly around the development of tiered training which could link to KSF and to national targets.

On the whole would have been lost without it and the quality of discussion would not have been there in the tight time frames we have to work to.

***Margaret Winton***

***Project Manager for Change programme fund for Learning disabilities in Tayside***

The UK Health and Learning Disability Network remain unique in its ability to update and inform professionals working in the field of Intellectual Disabilities. The network provides 'hot off the press' political, educational and clinical initiatives so that professionals and people with disabilities can benefit at the earliest opportunity. I have personally used the network for consultation purposes and to disseminate information as well as to locate and connect with (learn from) services involved in best practice initiatives. This is especially important when you don't want to reinvent the wheel or repeat the failures identified by those with more experience. I have recently been involved in developing services around the mental health and wellbeing of people and have located like minded professionals where their expertise has yet to be recorded in any written format (it is so up to date). Please keep up the good work.

***Paul Hosker***

***Nyrs Cyswllt Iechyd - Arweinydd Iechyd Meddwl/ Health Liaison Nurse - Mental Health Lead, Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Grwp Rhaglen Glinigol Iechyd Meddwl ac Anableddau Dysgu / Mental Health & Learning Disability Clinical Programme Group, Hafod, Canolfan Adnoddau Iechyd Meddwl / Mental Health Resource Centre***

I find the network absolutely invaluable in enabling me to keep up with what is happening in the world of learning disability. Without it it would be considerably more difficult for me to keep my practice as a nurse up to date. I have been able to gather information and resources to help me with areas of my practice and have been able to keep informed on current events and policy by reading the discussion threads. In short I couldn't live without it!

***Darren Parkinson Community Nurse (Registered Nurse Learning Disability)***

I have been a member of the Learning Disability Health Network for many years throughout my Nurse Training and beyond. It is an invaluable resource for many reasons, working in a collaborative environment pools

available resources to find the necessary expertise to manage and direct projects, it provides answers to queries, evidence for researchers and promotes topical discussion helping carer's and professionals alike. Sharing of good practice and easy read accessible literature are also disseminated here which save the time, money and energy of us poor over paper worked nurses, and I for one (along with many others) would be lost without it! We need the LD Health network to keep on going as many multidisciplinary professionals, care givers, health students, employers and service users would be sadly lacking in a fantastic, diverse forum of knowledge and skills from people all over the world.

***Teresa Hannaway RN/LD Primary Care Health Facilitator***

The Learning Disabilities Network has proved to be an invaluable resource for many professionals, carers and families. As a professional Learning Disability Nurse I find that the opportunity to share ideas, to learn from others, and to ensure the sharing of best practice across the UK has led to enhanced practice. The time investment needed to read and respond to network messages has led to time savings in the long term, as I have been able to introduce work which other people have shared into practice, without the need to "reinvent the wheel" as it were. The Network provides a valuable learning resource for students, and is also a good forum for launching research, sharing findings, and checking out interest in new ideas and new ways of working. In these times of austerity, the value of information sharing and networking is perhaps at its highest. As efficiency savings see the structure of Learning Disability service provision change at a rapid rate I feel it is essential that good practice as well as "mistakes not to repeat" can be shared amongst those endeavouring to ensure quality service delivery, and the carer's and families who facilitate the implementation of services.

***Annie Jones. RNLD, BSc (Hons), SP (CLDN) Autism Specialist Nurse***

The post of strategic health facilitator (and indeed many posts within the field of learning disabilities) is often one carried out in isolation and to have Janet Cobb and her wonderful LD network is absolutely vital to my role and in essence is my job share. I could not have carried out my job without the network beside me - it provides support at the press of a button and signposting and guidance to best practice and ultimately better care and improved access to mainstream NHS services.

***Wendy Howard Oxfordshire PCT***

I have found the network an invaluable source of information since it began. It helps me keep updated with current issues and great to hear practical solutions to everyday problems we all face in practice. As I work in commissioning services, I link with a range of independent support providers and forward a lot of information from the network to them. I have used the network myself to post questions and have been happy with the prompt and very useful replies. It's a great way of connecting and sharing good practise with a range of other people. It would be a great loss to me if the network closes.

***Anne Chambers Coming Home Project Coordinator***

The UK Health and LD Network has been an invaluable resource over the 6 years that I have been a member. The instant and free access to this national pool of expertise has helped me develop local resources that directly impact on the care people with learning disabilities receive when they use primary care and acute hospital services where I work. From Hospital Passports to Annual Health Checks, local people with learning disabilities are receiving information and hands on support that has been developed using the wealth of knowledge and best practice examples from across the network. I would be extremely surprised if this 'not re-inventing the wheel' approach to freely and quickly sharing resources, does not save the NHS in excess of thousands of hours worth of paid time per year. I and the organisation I work for, have certainly benefited from the time and associated costs

saved from receiving requested resources via the network. Everything from designing assessment tools to writing job descriptions has saved my organisation hundreds of hours in development time & meetings etc. the network is a must for anyone remotely interested in an efficient & reliable source of current LD practice.

***Mark Bradley Health Facilitation Co-ordinator, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust***

I use the network on a daily basis to keep myself updated with current issues, to read the latest government documents and to find out other views/ dilemmas that come up in our day to day work and where healthy debate can be carried out. This is the only network I feel I can rely on to keep me comprehensively informed about learning disabilities and I would be lost without it. I have also used the network to ask questions and gain views about development work. It is an invaluable service which allows quick access to information without having to scrawl through loads of different websites to gather what I need

***Claire Dawson Nurse manager, Barnet Learning Disabilities Service***

My name is Siobhan Brennan and I am a Clinical Scientist in Audiology at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals and the chair of the national Hearing and Learning Disabilities Group. The LDHealthNetwork has been an invaluable source of information across a broad range of topics relating to our specific clients. The LDHealthNetwork has improved Audiology services for individuals with learning disabilities by providing excellent information, links and sources of training to the professionals providing these services.

***Siobhan Brennan Clinical Scientist in Audiology, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals***

I find the network an extremely useful resource for sharing and learning about innovative practice around the country, sharing practical resources and obtaining advice and ideas when working with complex clinical cases. The network is an invaluable

forum for support and advice when working with our complex and unique clients.

***Dr Claire David Clinical Psychologist***

I am the team manager of the children's learning disability team within Wigan borough. I have been a member of Learning disability network for over 9 years. Over these years I've seen the usefulness and the service grow. Working within children's services there can be limited access to other people within my field. The network has enabled me to keep in touch with other people and groups but also to continue updating myself with present changes in practice. As we all know time is precious and at times it is hard to keep up to date and be able to gather information that may be used to develop better and more effective ways of working. The network not only keeps the subscriber up to date but brings differing documents and new websites that ordinarily may be overlooked. To be honest at times it has been a god send to have a much needed document land in your in box. I would not have as much information as I do now had it not been for the net work. I have recently completed a masters in research, again the documents were used but I know that should I need to contact a wider group of people when I wish to complete more research I know the net work is an excellent way of getting in touch with not only other professionals but parents not only in my immediate area but further afield. I know parents find it useful to just ask questions and to access assistance for others. It is a very effective method of gathering information in a timely manner. In a world where funding is short and people are urged to use their time efficiently, whilst ensuring evidence based practice, these networks are needed and essential to maximise and move forward people's rights. People who have a learning disability and their supporters are in the minority and it is these people who will be overlooked in cut backs. It is by keeping such networks going that it not only reaches people but people's views can be harnessed and taken forward. In summary this net work provides opportunities to:- - share information - ask questions - gain reports

and information which may take time or be overlooked - a link to other professionals - a link to government legislation and research such as IHAL - gain information from other countries - promote best practice - to act as a central point to gather information - promote and keep in the for front the rights of people with a learning disability and their carers.

*Jude Seaward Team Manager, Children's Learning Disability Team, Wigan*

I have to start by saying I never write testimonials for anyone or any business I make a strong exception to my rule for Janet Cobb. There are many reasons for this and I will try to make this as succinct as I possibly can. Janet's expertise, knowledge and network of contacts in the health and social care world are in my view second to none. Her research knowledge alone would benefit any organisation struggling to find the answers. Any request I have made to Janet regarding information specific to the problem at hand has been met with a positive answer, response and appropriate advice and links to resources and people. Janet is passionate about what she does and this is reflected in her approach to everyone she meets and supports. At this time of economic restraints we need to evidence why we utilise external experts and I have to advise that investment in Janet is worth every penny. Thank you Janet!

*Andrew Durkin Transition Manager, Integrated Health & Social Care Commissioning Unit*

What is this about this network under threat? I hope not. This is invaluable to me in my role as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in ageing and dementia (Intellectual Disabilities) in Ireland. The amount of information I have accessed and is now stored on my computer in work is a testimony to this. In fact while I was studying for my higher diploma/masters in university I was able to seek the help of other professionals via this network in my research. Work which would not have been possible without this site, it opens up a huge audience. This of course allows the sharing of

information within other disciplines who work closely in the field of intellectual disabilities. The links that this web-site opens up are just amazing and makes research a pleasure, it can take the chore out of reaching out, and not always sure what your audience might be. By this valuable resource it is possible to make contact with others in the same area of expertise and at the same time keep up-to-date with current best practise in other areas of practise. What more can I say, there is so much more I could write about but this sums it up I feel and on more than one occasion have my colleagues and I discussed the benefits of this network.

*Breda Eiffe CNS ageing/dementia*

Dear Janet, I wanted to let you, and others know that the LD HealthNetwork is a very valuable forum for the sharing of information. I have posted questions on the network and have gathered information about a range of topics over the last 5 years. It is particularly useful for finding out about resources, activities, conferences, training and for sharing practice and solving problems. I have been able to benefit from the responses that people post on issues that are very relevant to my practice, such as PMLD, eating and swallowing, posture, community safety and behaviour. I have also responded to queries raised by others. This forum performs a unique role in the sharing of information, and at a time when we are seeing more mobile working, it enables practitioners to keep in touch with important issues.

*Lucy Wood Occupational Therapist, Oxfordshire Learning Disability NHS Trust (Ridgeway Partnership)*

I wanted to express my gratitude to the service provided from jan-net.co.uk, the learning disability network and in particular Janet Cobb. As I work in Scotland, it was always difficult for me to keep up to date with current legislation, practices, examples of best practice and colleagues who could be useful for my work, career and development. However once I had begun to make use of the LD network, a great deal of these issues were resolved. I cannot count the number of times

the LD network has put me in touch with the perfect person to aid a question I have or provided me with information that was essential for my work place. Janet Cobbs abilities and insight have greatly influenced my recent progress in the field of forensic learning disability work. Through Janet's contact base, she put me in contact with an editor who published my first piece of professional research. A proud moment in my life which made me very grateful to Janet and the LD network. The response to this publication resulted in my work gaining local and national media attention. I have also received job offers and opportunities to carry out more research with various universities. Needless to say, I place a great deal of faith in the work carried out by the LD network and Janet. It would be a terrible loss to myself and a great number of people if this resource were not available in the future.

***Gary Docherty Learning Disability  
Trained Nurse, Scottish Prison Service***

## Family

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My name is Carole Tudor. I am a retired teacher and speech and language therapist. I am a trustee of Northam Lodge, a charity that provides residential and day care for adults with severe and complex physical and learning disabilities. I live in rural North Cornwall. More important, I have a stepson aged 58 years who has severe spastic quadriplegia, complex health needs and learning disabilities.

My stepson, has had several severe health crises during the past 18 months. I found the LD health network while desperately hunting for a source of information and support. It has proved to be a vital lifeline in providing me the contacts and advice that I have needed in order to be able to understand Eddie's problems and ensure that his needs were met. I am deeply grateful for the generous help both online and over the telephone that strangers have given me. This help has made a considerable positive difference to the quality of Eddie's life - in fact I believe that it has been life saving. Words cannot express how hard it is to have to support a loved one under these circumstances and to feel so isolated and alone.

Knowing that the network is there also provides me with an important emotional safety net. I would be distraught if I lost this support. I have also found information on the network that has informed and enhanced my work as a trustee.

*Carole Tudor*

*Teacher & Speech and Language Therapist (retired), Parent*

My name is Michael Ormian and I am the father of an adult daughter who has very profound intellectual and multiple disabilities.

The LD Health Network has been a lifesaver on many occasions - we have used it for information on a wide variety of issues including constipation, depression, and AED side effects. We have always valued the numerous responses received from both

professionals and family carers. It would be an awful tragedy if the Network were to fail because of funding issues. The government tells us on a regular basis that good health is of paramount importance for the entire population. How much more important can it be for people with a learning disability. I hope that funding does materialise and look forward to many years of using the Health Network.

*Mike, Julie and Rebecca Ormian*

Janet Cobb runs a number of health related networks for those of us who are interested in getting the very best support for people with learning disabilities and their families. Families, who support over 60% of the population of adults with learning disabilities, are dependent on having the right information, at the right time to enable them to advocate effectively for their family member. The information that Janet sends out via her networks is invaluable!

*Cally Ward*

## Independent Sector

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The network is an excellent means of keeping in touch with best practice and innovation in relation to the health and related needs of people with learning difficulties. It is particularly important at the current time, for two main reasons:

Such comprehensive information is of additional value at a time of austerity, when both managers and practitioners want to ensure that their work has maximum impact and that they are serving their clients in the best way possible. This sharing of practice through the network is one of the best-value methods of promoting good ideas and creative thinking, and of ensuring that time is not wasted re-inventing the wheel

There is a greater awareness of the importance of different departments working together to ensure a coherent and consistent service offer to people with learning

## Private Sector

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The Network provides a unique mechanism for communication and sharing of expertise and good practice between health professionals, voluntary organisations, service users, carers. It also facilitates alliances and networking that in turn enable resources to be targeted and maximised more effectively essential at a time of major financial recession. The regular Forum Meetings provide important opportunities for dialogue and input by frontline practitioners and the D Of H at a time of challenge and change. The Health Network is extremely cost effective and has enormous potential in supporting the delivery of the Big Society Agenda.

Unknown-sax

difficulties – this is one of the key proposals of the recent green paper ‘Support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability’. As someone working in the field of post-16 education for people with learning difficulties, the network is invaluable in enabling me to keep in touch with health developments and to ensure that members of my organisation are also kept informed. If the vision of a properly joined up service is to become a reality, we need to have a common understanding of the issues and be able to share ideas and developments across different sectors.

I therefore hope that this important network will continue its excellent work in promoting the very best interests of people with learning disabilities.

*Alison Boulton*  
*Chief executive, Association of National Specialist Colleges: Natspec*

I cannot stress enough how important it is to maintain the existence of the Learning Disability Network. Since its inception, this very active connection between so many people who share a common focus, is now the primary source in the UK that drives the government’s directives and keeps professionals updated instantly in the most cost effective way.

This network also links organisations and individuals throughout the UK (and more recently internationally) with an incredible speed and accuracy. It enables people who are geographically far apart, to receive practical answers and problem solving solutions whether they are individuals, families, nursing teams, Hospital Trusts or any such organisation.

On a daily basis, the network prevents unnecessary duplication of work, shares ideas and experiences, creates alliances between individuals and their organisations and is a

direct method of communication not replicated so successfully anywhere between Lands End and John O'Groats.

What has made this network unique is the driving force powered by the dedication, long hours and hard work of its originator Janet Cobb who laboriously reads through every submission to ensure that it is specifically brought to the attention of those who she knows will have a particular interest.

In this age where the financial axe is being wielded with great gusto, I have to say that this is one critical tool that we cannot afford to cut. As they say in the retail trade, "When it's gone, it's gone!"

***Kenn Jupp***

Since joining the network i have found it a very useful learning tool. If I am experiencing a situation i have not encountered before I can log on to the forum and seek advice from other professionals and, by receiving the emails, I can be notified of potential risks or potential changes in legislation long before they become an issue for my organisation or my customers. For example, I first heard about the NDTi 'Real Tenancy Test' on the forum, before it went to print in a magazine for professionals, and half a year before our council inspector came by to inspect us on how we were measuring up to it. It's situations like this that make me feel being a member puts me one step ahead.

I find the forum and regular emails a great resource and would be sad to see it go.

***Lauren McGill***

***Deputy Manager of a Supported Living Agency***

I find the network enormously helpful in the following ways:

- A source of information
- An opportunity to share ideas and debate
- Sign posting to great resources
- Excellent opportunity to network and build professional relationships with others working in the same field
- A great way to advertise events
- Reduces isolation
- Enables people not only within the UK but world wide to keep abreast of worldwide events and issues

It would be a great loss.

Personal thank you to you Janet for all your support with out ventures, good luck

***Hazel Ratcliffe***

***Director, Ratcliffe Consultancy***

I am writing to say that I find the UK Health and Learning Disability Network immensely useful. I don't work in LD, I work with older people, but information available through the network is relevant across different services. I recently used information from the network in a local Marie Curie Delivering Choice Project, and that is just one example of the network saving me from having to re-invent the wheel.

***Elaine Grace***

***Director, Carewatch (Ipswich)***

I write to commend the work of the Network which provides valuable sharing of best practice, problem solving, initiatives, events, barriers etc at a national level. It is hard to envisage a more effective and inexpensive means of so many professionals and other stakeholders being able to share information at a national level, and so quickly also. I find the information posted useful in my work as a lead senior manager with responsibility for initiatives and quality support.

It would be a devastating loss to the sector should we lose this resource.

***Michael Fullerton***

***Clinical Director, CMG***

I am an early years SEN inclusion teacher, working in Oxfordshire. I also direct a small company, Tacpac Ltd, and my life's work is immersed in SEN matters. I find the network so incredibly helpful, as it brings together like minded people who otherwise might be quite isolated, not only in their problems, but also in their solutions. There are so many good ideas, tips, courses, policies and advice etc on this forum, which is unlike any other. I know of no other place which is dedicated to helping professionals and people with SEN. If this network closed down, we would return to being isolated, battling against a world which is fast and pacey but which does not include the people who are being cared for through this network. To the outside world, we would become even more invisible than we are at present. Please help to keep this forum going.

**Hilary Wainer**

**Early Years SEN Inclusion  
Teacher**

The UK Health and Learning Disability Network is an extremely valuable source of information for everyone working with people with learning disabilities. It is one of the few ways in which health professionals and others can share information and keep up to date with developments.

**Elinor Harbridge**

**Editor, Community Living magazine -  
campaigning for equal citizenship for people  
with learning difficulties**

Dear Janet

I would like to say how much I value the UK health and Learning Disability Network.

I work across a number of number of equality strands as a disability consultant, independent researcher, Independent Chair of the Adult Care Transformation Board for a local authority and also as an Advisor for a leading south west self-advocacy organisation, Wiltshire People First.

In all of these capacities the LD network has been extremely useful in keeping me informed and up to date with policy and guidance, what's happening elsewhere by the sharing of good and developing practice and validating the work by knowing that others are out there committed to making things better for people who use social care services and even those who don't!

Please keep up the good work.

**Angie Carmichael**

**Director, Disability Training, Research &  
Consultancy, Sparring Partners Productions  
Ltd**

Janet Cobb's network is extraordinarily useful. In fact it is invaluable. It links organisations together, it enables people to find answers and support in order to give the best service

they can to people with learning disabilities. It is a fantastic learning tool and a fantastic knowledge tool. It celebrates and disseminates good practice across the country, inspiring other's to follow good models of practice. It would be a tragedy if we were to lose this very simple way of

networking people together that so clearly improves services for people with learning disabilities. There is no other service like this.

**Jo Giles**

**Easy Health Manager at Generate  
Opportunities Ltd**

My name is Rose Harwood. I am a Freelance Consultant delivering training to 'hands-on' staff in Health and Social Care. I have special interests in services for older people with Id, dementia, and end of life care. I'm also a Research Fellow for Norah Fry Research Centre at Bristol University on the Confidential Inquiry into the premature deaths of people with learning disabilities.

The Network has been so helpful in keeping me informed about legal and policy developments in these areas. It's also great to see the exchange of ideas and sharing of best practice. So many precious hours and days must have been saved because network members have shared their work with great generosity. Thanks to Janet and the Health Network, reinventing the wheel is a thing of the past!

**Rose Harwood**  
*Freelance Consultant, Research Fellow for Norah Fry Research Centre at Bristol University*

I am a Behavioural Specialist working for an independent Supported Living provider. As a practitioner I rely very heavily on the UK Network. It is an essential tool for keeping up to date with

- Contemporary research into Learning Disabilities
- Changes in government policy ( and contributing to such changes)
- Details of event and conferences of interest
- Hearing of new resources or publications
- Networking with my colleagues
- "Picking people's brains"
- Generally staying in touch

Learning disability nursing can be a lonely occupation with resources and competent advice hard to find. The UK network helps fill that void. I can honestly say that I could not do my job without the UK Network

**Simon Jones**  
*Behavioural Specialist and Learning Disability Nurse*

I have been subscribed to the LD network for

a few years and it is my main source of news. Without this service I would need to subscribe to news feeds, which in my experience turn up less relevant information. I also value the interactive nature of the network and have posted several questions and answered those of others. All this has been very useful but the main benefit for me is a continued sense of belonging to a set of diverse group who nevertheless have shared values. This was a great support to me when I moved from the NHS to the private sector. Hope you keep it going.

**Keith Jones**  
*Quality Improvement Coordinator, Ludlow Street Healthcare*

For myself and my company the UK Health and Learning Disability Network is established as an essential part of what informs our work and keeps us in touch with new developments.

I have made use of the network in bringing to others attention work that we are involved with as well as being a regular recipient of the e-mails informing me of work elsewhere. I do not know of any other similar networks which provide me with the regularity, breadth and recency of information. It would be a sad loss to see this go and would leave a gaping hole in our information exchange.

**Dr Colin Dale**  
*Chief Executive - Caring Solutions (UK) Ltd*

The UK Health and Learning disability Network has been an invaluable source of information and support to me to provide the very best of care to our patients. The sharing of best practice across the UK has been such a huge success and always great to be a part of improving things for others. The health and learning disability network needs to be protected.

**Marie Henriksen** *Practice Nurse, Partnerships in Care*

## Professional Body: RCN

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With 415,000 members, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the UK's largest professional association and trade union for nursing staff, including registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, health care assistants and nursing cadets. RCN members deliver care in health and social care settings, in both public and the private sector. This includes prison settings, police custody, courts and immigration/ detention removal centres. The RCN works locally, nationally and internationally to promote high standards of care and the interests of patients and nurses, and of nursing as a profession.

As Royal College of Nursing UK Advisor for Learning Disability Nursing, I would like to express my support on behalf of the RCN LD

## Voluntary Sector

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We are writing to express our support for the UK Health and Learning Disability Network.

We are a not-for-profit organisation and have been producing resources for the learning disability sector for several years, on issues including primary health, hospital care, relationships and related subjects. When we first began our work in this area we were very soon told, by every professional we came across, that we needed to consult the UK Health and Learning Disability Network. This proved to be excellent advice. The Network may be little known outside its field, but within the sector it is an essential resource and much depended on by practitioners at all levels.

In our own case, the research for each of our projects, subsequent production, and finally the dissemination of completed resource packs, would have been much more difficult without the UK Health and Learning Disability Network. We know that for those professionals working closer to the front line,

nursing forum and members of the network that Janet leads. In my seven years at the RCN, I have found this network superbly valuable. Providing up to date information, and an opportunity to network with colleagues and other professional/service user groups.

Janet's network has gained huge respect and credibility from nurses and in nursing. She has ably sustained local, national and international links which have been profoundly helpful.

On behalf of the Royal College of Nursing, I have no hesitation whatsoever in pledging our support for this valuable resource.

Yours sincerely,

**Ann Norman**  
*Learning Disability Adviser*

the Network is even more important.

In the current financial situation we feel it is

particularly important that such a valuable and cost-effective network should be maintained.

**Ms Terry Wragg**  
*Co-Director, Leeds Animation Workshop*

The Jan-Net health network has helped so many of the disabled people we support on a voluntary basis. The information our volunteers are able to pass on from Jan-Net to disabled people and their families during our home visits is immeasurable.

With the financial cuts being made in Health and Social Care, it is important that services like Jan-Net continue in order for the voluntary sector to provide the same level of service to vulnerable people.

**Les Scaife**  
*Chair, West Lancs Peer Support*

## Ireland

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### Academic

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I have been in receipt of information from the UK Health and Learning Disability Network for some time now and I consider it to be making a significant contribution to the development of a network of learning and intellectual disability nurses across the UK and Ireland. The fact that it is reaching Ireland is important as Learning/Intellectual disability nursing is limited geographically to these islands and has a shared history but somewhat divergent paths. That this network is developing within the broader context of learning disability may provide a context for shared learning from the experiences of all five countries on these islands, with the potential for that learning to have influence farther afield.

*Dr. Fintan Sheerin*

*Lecturer in Intellectual Disabilities, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Dublin*

Janet

The resources I receive through Christine Hughes (via UK health and Learning Disability network) are invaluable to me. I can pick out the topics that I have an interest in. I am alerted to conferences / events that I need to know about in time. I don't know how I could (outside of this site) actually get to hear about what is going on in particular in the UK regarding learning disabilities. As I am in education, I find it useful to read the problems / suggestions for practice staff. Thanks for the great resources you have given us to date please keep it going

*Therese Danaher*

*Lecturer in intellectual disabilities*

### Special Olympics

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I noticed that you were looking for feedback on the network and I would like to say that the information that I have received from yourself via Christine's website has always been so helpful and a reminder that there are people working so hard to gain best practice in the area of Learning Disabilities and this is an impetus for people to keep working at the best for their clients. It also has been for me, an active resource for conferences and also subjects that are pertinent to people with learning disabilities in the moment.

*Muireann Ni Riain Special Olympics*

## Clinical

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I am working as a CNS in Paediatric Intellectual Disability. The LD network has been a fantastic resource for providing a link to the most recent literature available. To be honest I would be lost without it. While some of the emails do not apply to me I have come across a large amount of reports etc that I would have had to search for on an individual basis if the LD network was not available.

*Eimear Daly*

*Clinical Nurse Specialist, in Paediatric Intellectual Disability, Mercy University Hospital*

The services provided by the network are invaluable to Stewarts for the following reasons:

- Essential Link into specialist resources of national and international practice
- A safe place that supports interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary networking.
- Access to a wide and varied range of reference material which focus totally on the provision of optimum care for people with an intellectual disability.
- Access to partnerships with other hospitals / organisations that provide care for people with an Intellectual disability..
- Live resource that supports the development of policies, procedures, protocols and guidelines that are based on best practice
- Invaluable support to the education of nurses in Intellectual Disability and all staff members

In Summary, it is a resource that is pivotal to the lives of service users and staff. Thanks to the resource, staff are informed of quality improvements and initiatives that impact positively on the lives of the people they serve

*Stewarts Care Ltd.*

I am the Coordinator of Adult Intellectual Disability Services in Co. Meath, Eire. The UK Health and Learning Disability network is a huge source of information regarding established and emerging issues. We are not as organised in our service provision here, for

example we do not tend to receive national or political guidelines and so the Network is invaluable.

The two community nurses have found the Health Action Planning related information particularly useful.

I realise that we are not strictly part of the UK but I sincerely hope that the network will be facilitated to continue.

*Liz Warters*

*Coordinator, Meath Adult Intellectual Disability Community Service*

Dear Janet,

I receive the updates from the Network and find them excellent and very informative. I have regularly passed on items to colleagues and families I work with. The links and information provided on the network has educated me and given me ideas of where to seek information on many varied subjects. I work as a Community Liaison Nurse in Ireland for Children with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism and Physical and Sensory Disabilities.

Christine Hughes in Eire regularly forwards on additional information from the Network which can be very useful.

*Liam Callaghan*

*Community Liaison Nurse/CNM2*

I have been a member of the UK Learning Disability and Health Network (LDHN) since 2002. During that time I have benefited immeasurably from the information and resources that have been shared by members of the network. I have been repeatedly impressed by the generosity shown by the network members in relation to the sharing of evidence for practice and the dissemination of professional expertise.

The LDHN has provided me with a resource- and time-efficient means of keeping up to date with developments taking place within the health and social sectors and within

learning disability nursing in the UK. Through the network I have made valuable professional contacts in the UK. During the last nine years, I have forwarded information from the LDHN to colleagues in Ireland which has led to the development of electronic networks comprising approximately 300 nurses and other health or social care professionals working in Irish intellectual disability services. The people who have benefited most from this regular sharing of information and best practice are, I hope, the service users, i.e, people with intellectual disabilities in Ireland.

I have had no hesitation in providing a testimonial for the LDHN and for Janet Cobb.

***Christine Hughes***  
***Professional Development Officer, National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery***

Hi Janet,

I am a Clinical Nurse Specialist based here in Dublin, Ireland and I work with people of all ages who present with challenging behaviours.

I have been a member of your network for the last few years (I am sorry I cannot remember when I joined !!)

Although I trained as a nurse in England, I have practiced here in Ireland for the past 30 years.

I am now in my 60s and have been a nurse trained in the learning disability field since 1968. The one thing I have learned over the years is that one never stops learning - every day. Your network allows me the opportunity to learn from others (and hopefully also to share with others ;-).

Your network is invaluable in facilitating me to provide the best possible service to the individuals that I work with. It does this by keeping me up to date with best practice and recent developments and innovations.

Thank you for your amazing work and I am sorry that it often goes unsung.

***Jeremy Jeffrey***  
***Clinical Nurse Specialist (Behaviour),  
Stewarts Care***

## International

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My name is Krissy Wright and I am the information Officer at the Donald Beasley Institute here in New Zealand. One of the most important aspects of my job is to find and disseminate relevant research and information in the area of intellectual/learning disabilities, not only within New Zealand but also internationally. The UK Health and Learning Disability Network has proved invaluable in enabling me to do this. Through this network I have located research and resources from varied international researchers and professionals. The Network has also created an opportunity for me to feed back the important research we do here in New Zealand on an international level.

In the last month as a result of this Network I have established relationships with professionals from Ireland, Wales, Canada, Australia and many more. The most valuable role the Network has is that it provides one resource where professionals and researchers from all over the world can go to share their research, their experience and to find what other important work is being conducted internationally.

I cannot express enough the importance of maintaining the UK Health and Learning Disability Network.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

*Krissy Wright*  
*Information Officer, Donald Beasley Institute*

I hope this helps - I use the Id healthnetwork all the time. It provides me with all kinds of wonderful information and resources that we don't necessarily have access to in Australia. It would such a shame to think that we could lose this valuable network.

*Jenny Butler Clinician, SECASA, AWARE PROGRAM*