



Under pressure

The relationships of UK parents who have a child with a learning disability

Easy-read Executive Summary

This is an easy-read summary of the research report *Under pressure: The relationships of UK parents who have a child with a learning disability*. To read the full report, please visit: <https://www.relate.org.uk/policy-campaigns/our-campaigns/way-we-are-now-2016>

What is it about?

A report was made by relationship support charities Relate and Relationships Scotland in partnership with the learning disability charity Mencap.

We asked parents who had a child with a learning disability what their relationships were like with their partners, families, friends and others. We also asked other parents about their relationships and compared the two groups of parents to explore any differences in how their relationships are going.

Why did we do this?

Good quality, supportive relationships are vital for our health and wellbeing. Good relationships with partners, families and friends can protect parents from poorer mental and physical health, and isolation.

What did we find?

Parents with a child with a learning disability told us that some things were difficult.

All relationships go through ups and downs. But families who care for a child with a learning disability often face particular challenges:

- They felt pressure from not having enough money
- They had less time to spend together as a couple
- They were more likely to feel lonely, and almost 1 in 6 had no close friends
- They were more likely to not enjoy good relationships

Families need support

The clear implication of our latest data is that **caring for a child**

with a learning disability can place additional pressures on relationships over and above those that every family faces, and key pressures such as money worries and childcare problems can have an even more significant impact on their wellbeing.

However, **things need not be this way**. We believe that, **with the right support, parents who have children with a learning disability can enjoy the same strong, good quality relationships as anyone else**.

What needs to change?

Relate and Mencap are calling for:

- Good quality information for parents on what support is available to them
- Effective identification and assessment of parents and family carers of people with a learning disability
- Increased take up of benefits which ‘passport’ you to other benefits for parent carers and disabled children
- Short ‘respite’ breaks for parents
- Better childcare support for families of children with a learning disability
- Targeted relationship support for parents of children with a learning disability.

About Relate

Relate is the UK's leading relationship support organisation, serving more than one million people through information, support and counselling every year. Our vision is a future in which healthy relationships are actively promoted as the basis of a thriving society.

We aim to develop and support healthy relationships by:

- Delivering inclusive, high quality services that are relevant at every stage of life
- Helping couples, families and individuals to make relationships work better
- Helping both the public and policy makers improve their understanding of relationships and what makes them flourish.

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About Relationships Scotland

Relationships Scotland supports a network of 22 member services across Scotland. We support family relationships, especially at times of crisis and key family transitions. We provide face-to-face support to over 15,000 people each year.

Our work focuses on prevention, early intervention and child protection. We provide relationship counselling, family mediation, child contact centres and other related forms of family support across all of Scotland.

Around 1,000 people are actively involved in the delivery of our services across Scotland, including around 600 volunteers.

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About Mencap

We are grateful to Mencap for generously sponsoring this research.

Mencap supports the 1.4 million people with a learning disability in the UK and their families and carers. Mencap fights to change laws and improve services and access to education, employment and leisure facilities, supporting thousands of people with a learning disability to live their lives the way they want.

0808 808 1111 | helpline@mencap.org.uk | @mencap_charity | www.mencap.org.uk