

The role of the specialist learning disability physiotherapist

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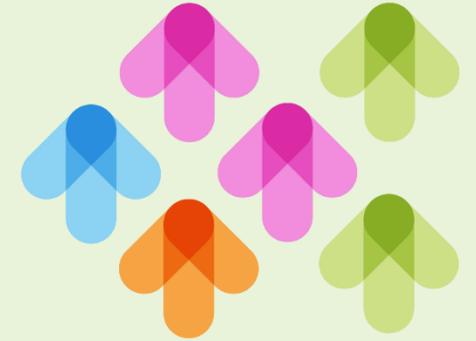


Aims:



1. Developing the standards of practice for physiotherapists working with adults with a learning disability
2. Definition of specialist learning disability physiotherapy
3. Pathway to delivering successful physiotherapy
4. Reasonable vs. Specialist adjustments
5. Role of the specialist learning disability physiotherapist
6. Physiotherapy needs of adults with a learning disability – through a series of case studies

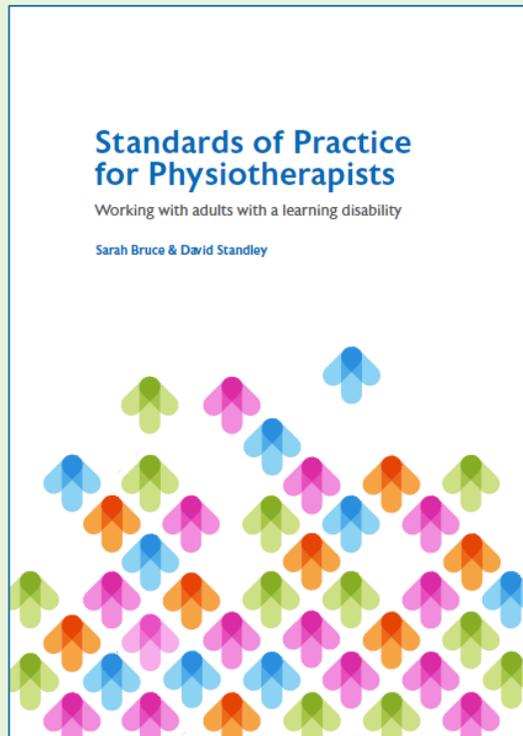
Rational for developing the standards of practice:



Increase in the numbers of adults with a learning disability who have physical disabilities who require specialist physiotherapy, but;

- Wide variations in the commissioning, provision and delivery of specialist learning disability physiotherapy services across the UK.
- Varied and sometimes poor understanding of the clinical area.
- Services and posts have been downgraded and decommissioned.
- Specialist learning disability physiotherapists are being asked to do roles that are outside of their scope of practice or that detract away from their main role.

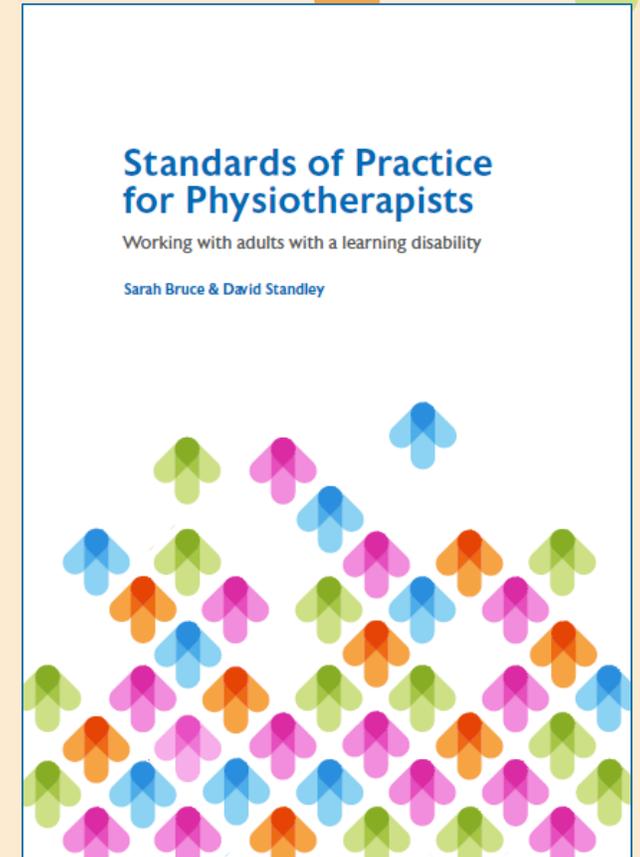
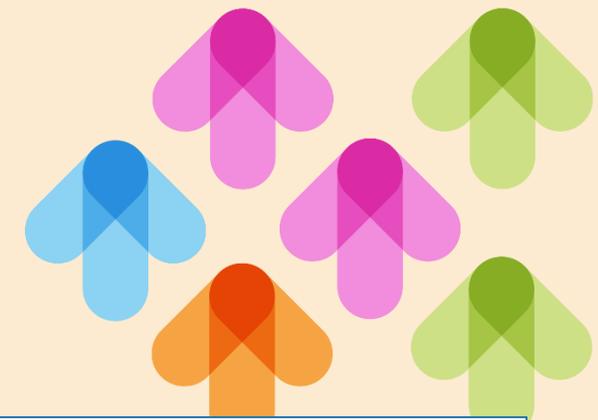
Results, in the physiotherapy needs of adults with learning disability not be met.



Aims of the standards of practice:

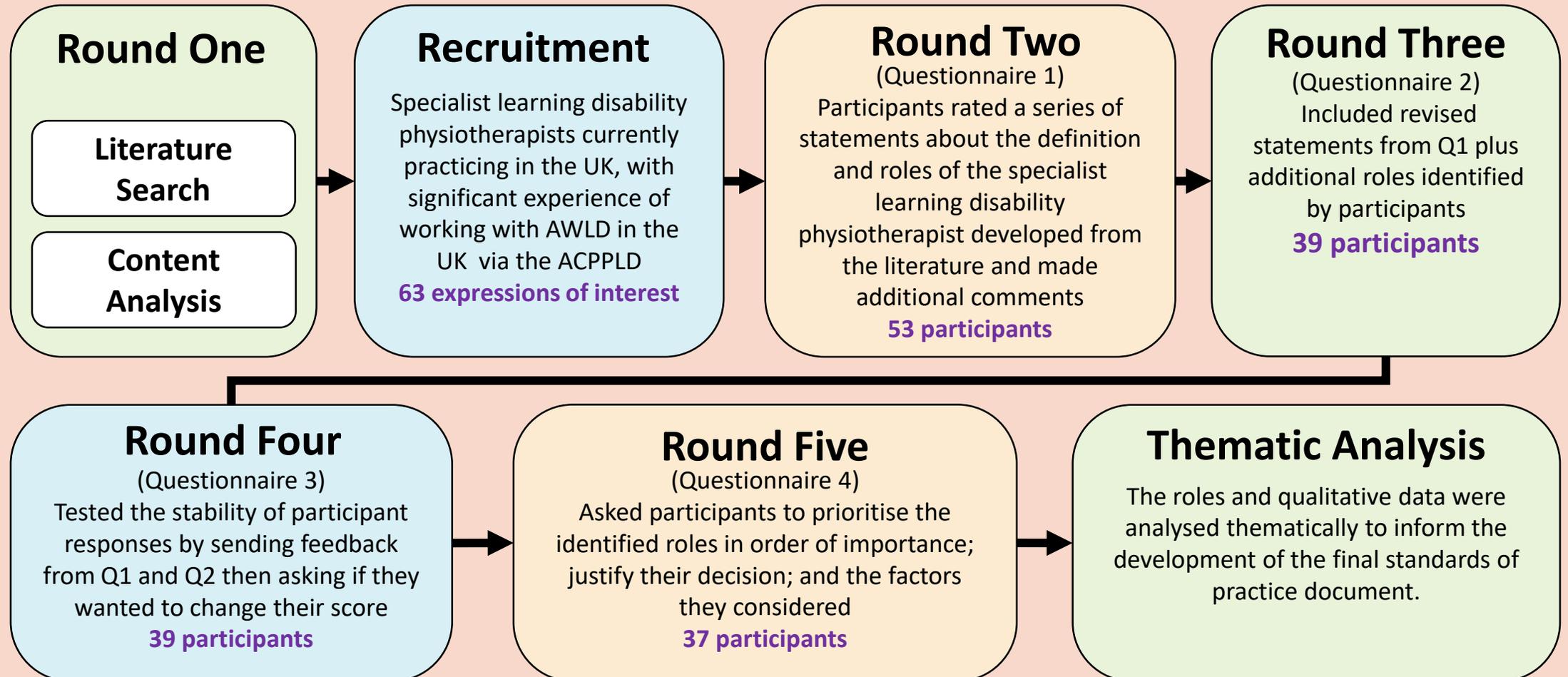
They were developed to:

1. Provide a definition of the role of the specialist learning disability physiotherapist.
2. Provide best practice guidance to improve the physiotherapy health outcomes for all adults with a learning disability.
3. Explore the adjustments that specialist learning disability physiotherapists make to provide successful physiotherapy
4. Raise awareness of the role of the specialist learning disability physiotherapist

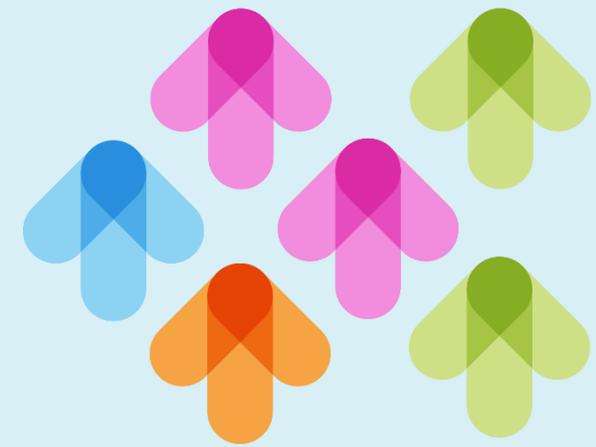


Research Methodology

5 round Modified Delphi Technique study to develop a **definition** and **standards of practice** of the role of the specialist learning disability physiotherapist.



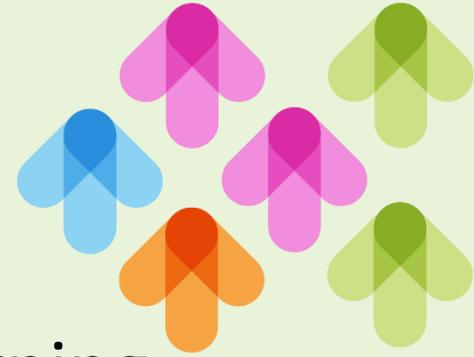
Definition of Specialist Learning Disability Physiotherapists:



"Learning disability physiotherapists provide specialist assessment, treatment and management to adults with a learning disability whose needs cannot be successfully met by mainstream services, even when reasonable adjustments are made.

Physiotherapists will work in collaboration with the person, their network of care, mainstream health services, and the multidisciplinary team to enhance, optimise and maintain the person's physical presentation, function and quality of life."

Delivering the definition:



To deliver the definition it is **essential** that specialist learning disability physiotherapy services:

- Are accessible and equitable to ALL adults with a learning disability with a physiotherapy need that cannot be met successfully by mainstream services even when reasonable adjustments are made.
- Are based on clinical need, not on an assumed level of a person's learning disability.
- Make the **ADJUSTMENTS** required to provide successful physiotherapy to adults with a learning disability
- Support positive access to and responses from mainstream physiotherapy and relevant healthcare services.

Pathway to providing successful physiotherapy to adults with a learning disability:

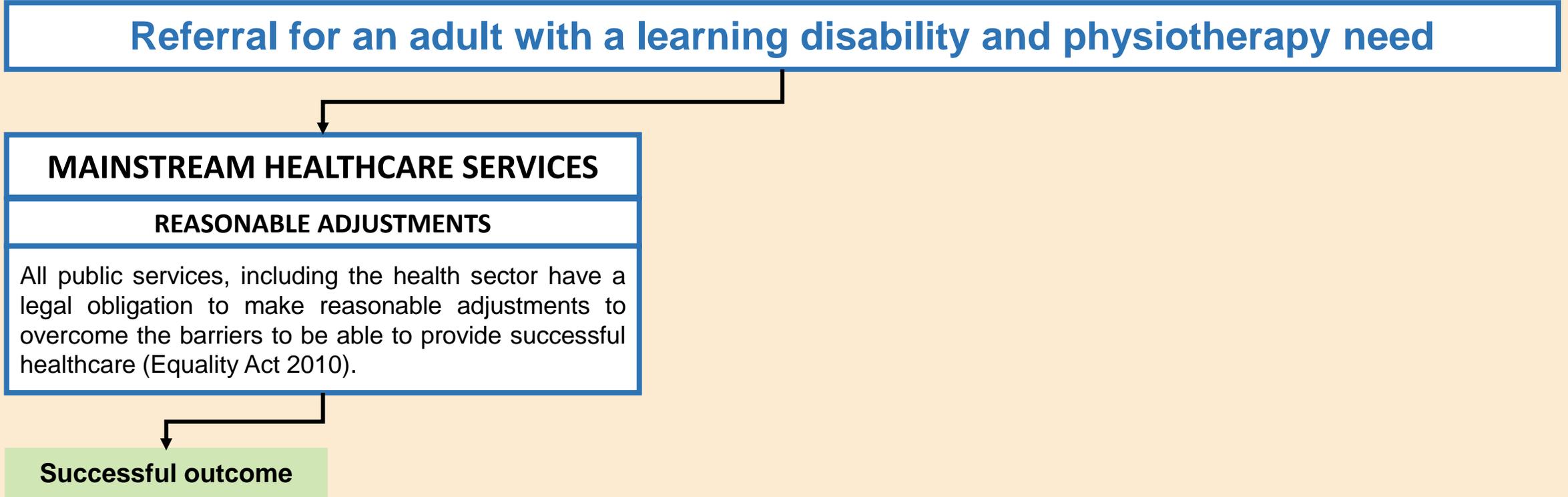
Referral for an adult with a learning disability and physiotherapy need

MAINSTREAM HEALTHCARE SERVICES

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

All public services, including the health sector have a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to overcome the barriers to be able to provide successful healthcare (Equality Act 2010).

Successful outcome



Reasonable adjustments:

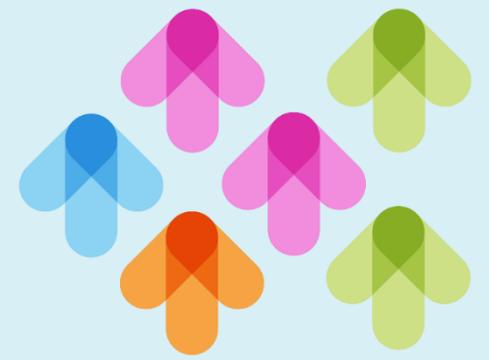
All public services have a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to overcome potential barriers.

Reasonable adjustments can mean:

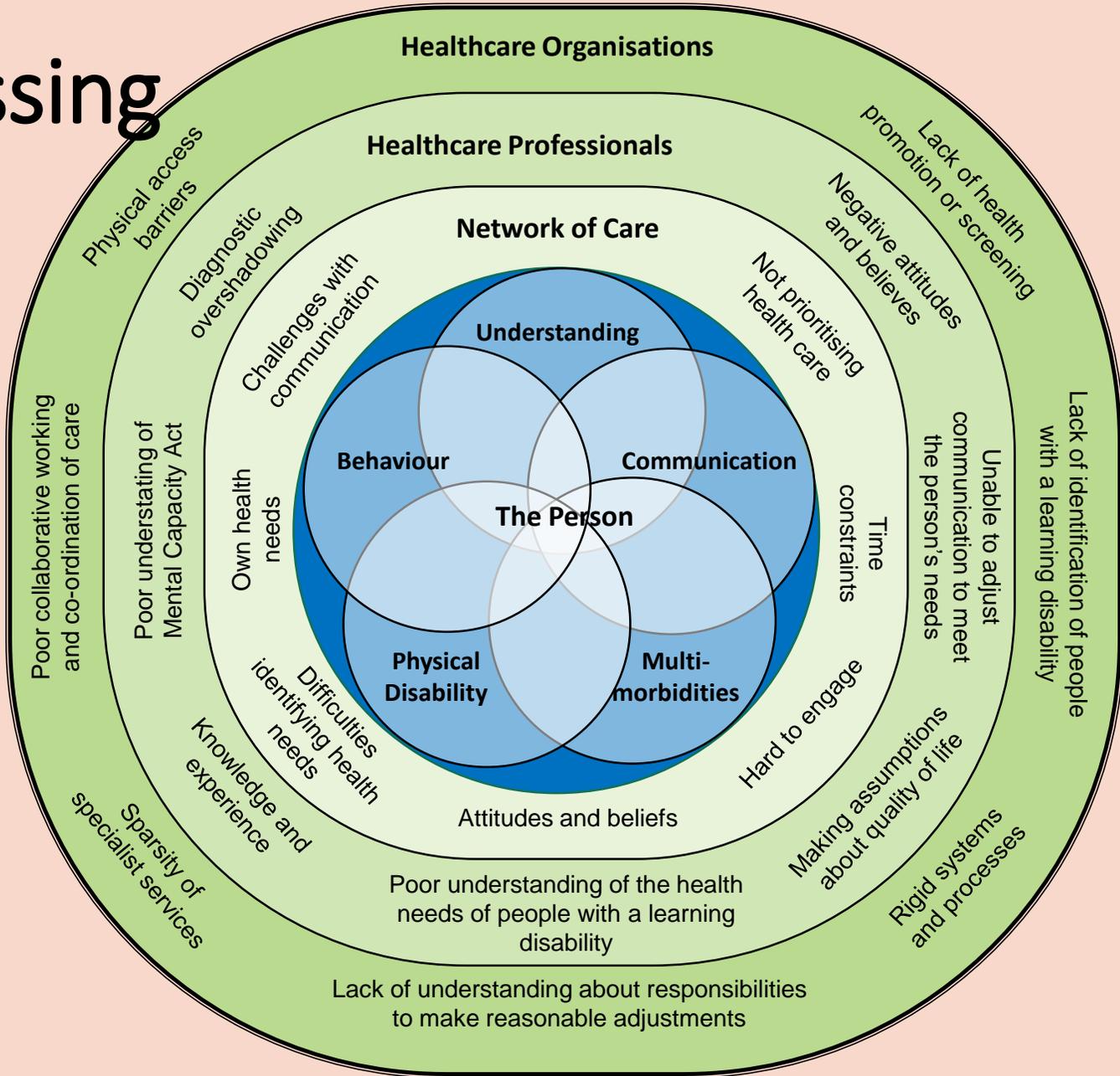
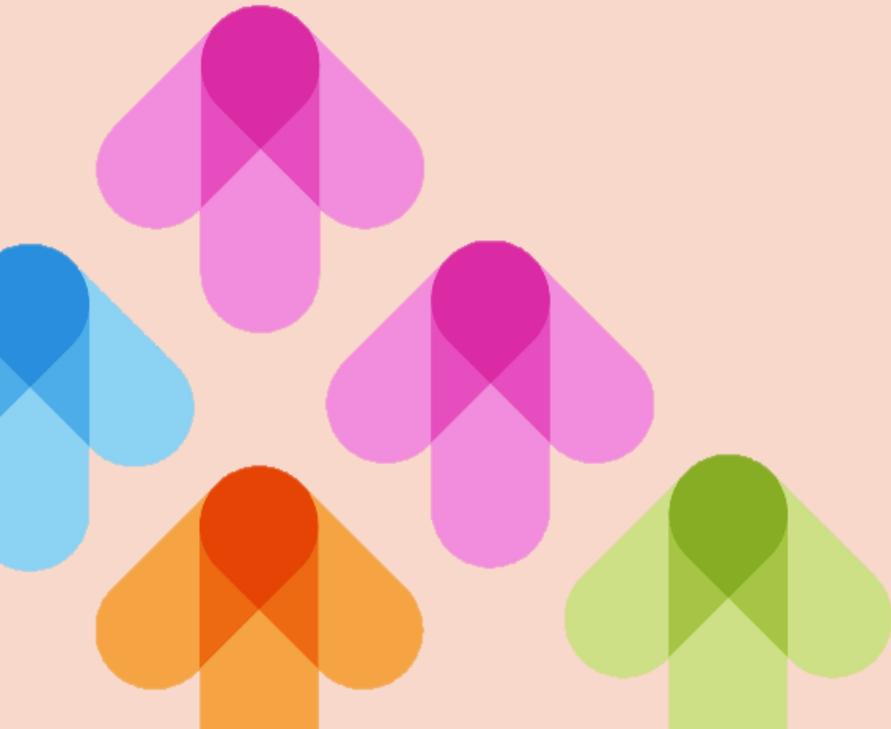
- Changing the way services provide assessment and treatment
- Making buildings accessible
- Changing policies and procedures
- Increasing the knowledge and skills of the workforce

Most adults with a learning disability will be able to successfully access mainstream services with reasonable adjustments.

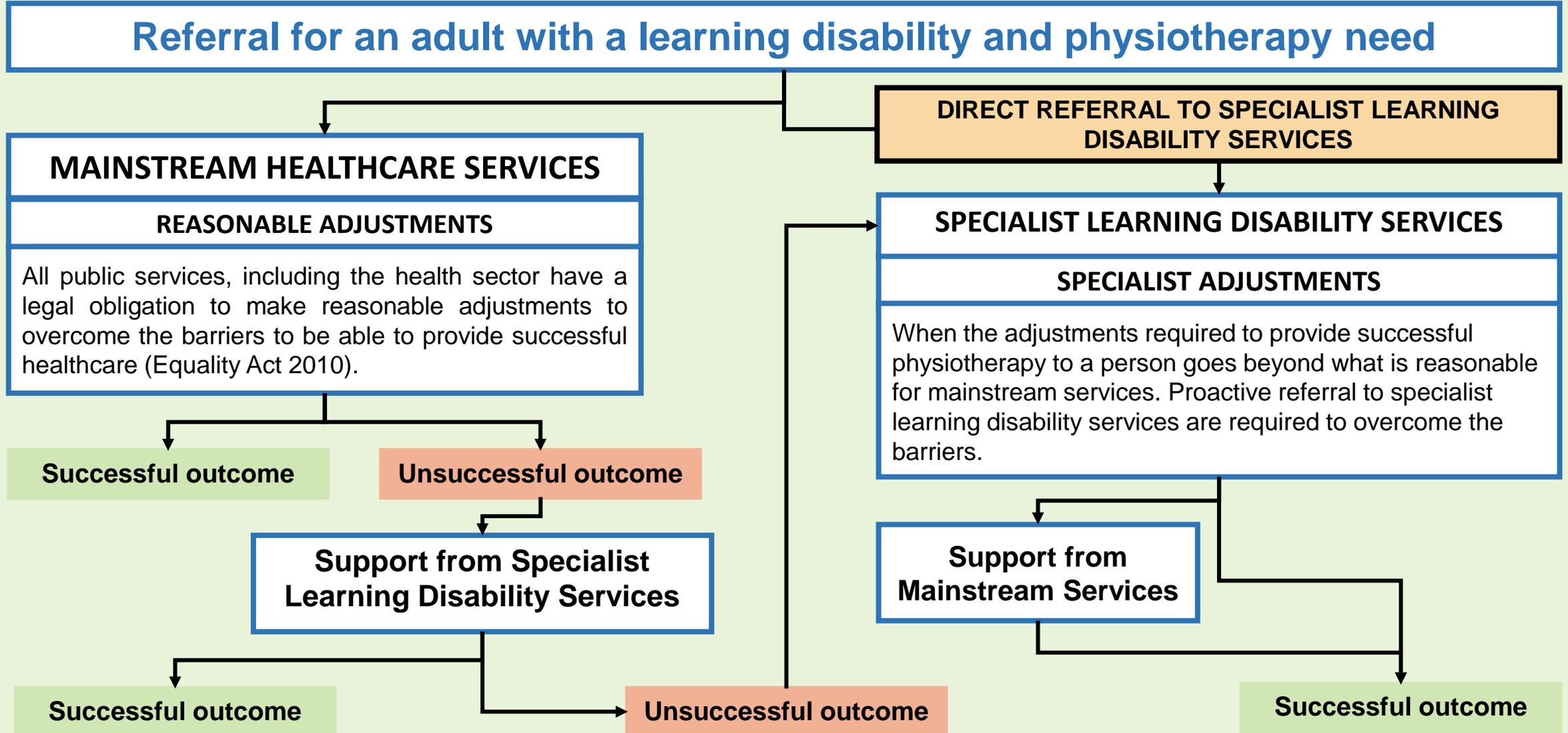
However, some people will require adjustments that go beyond what is reasonable and possible for mainstream services.



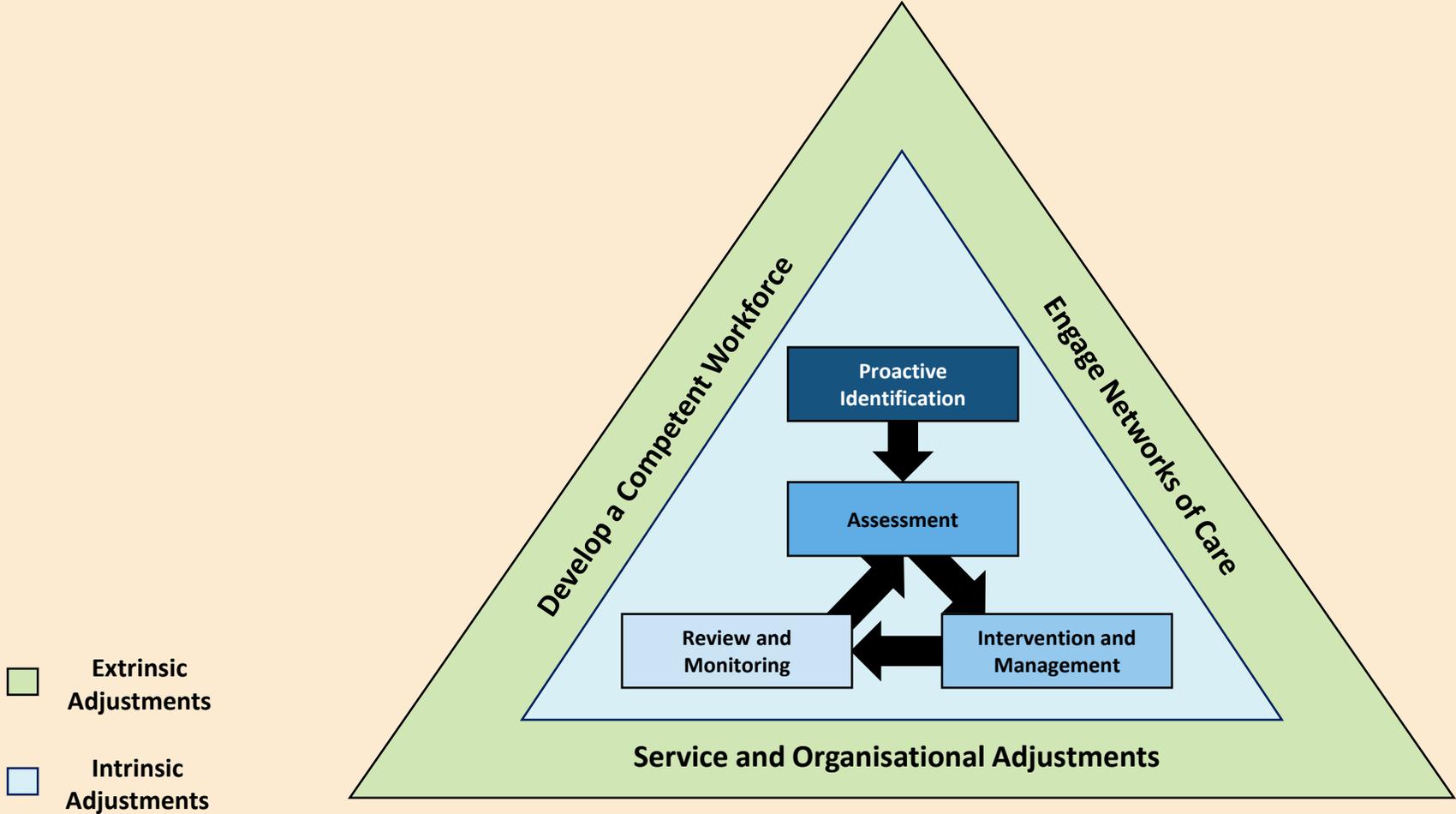
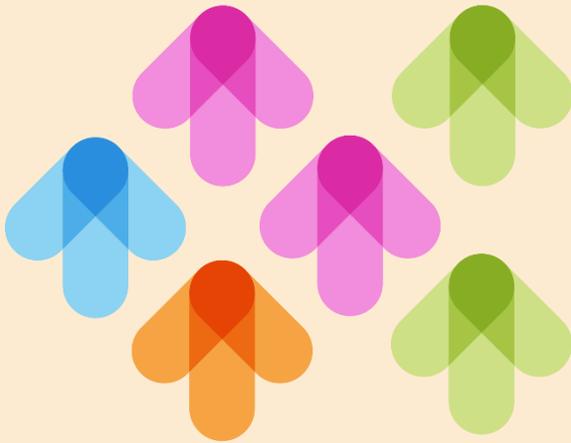
Barriers to Adults with a Learning Disability accessing successful healthcare:



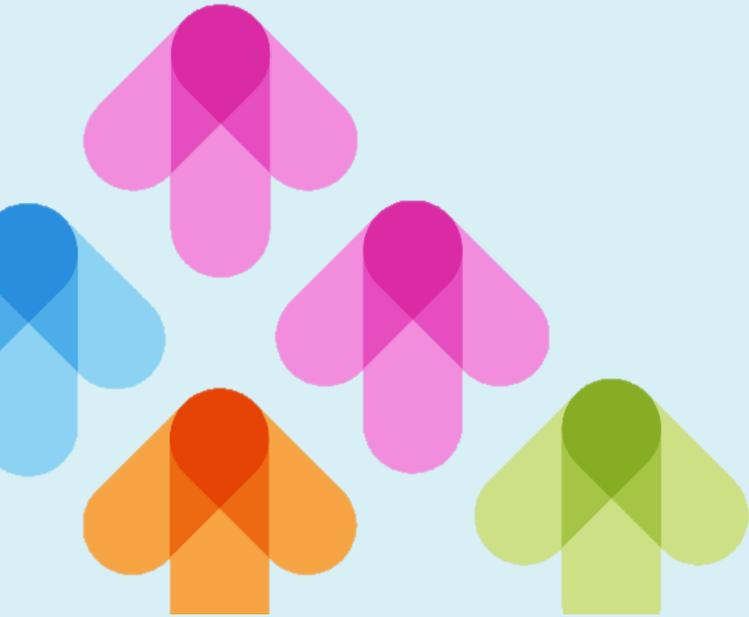
Pathway to providing successful physiotherapy to adults with a learning disability:



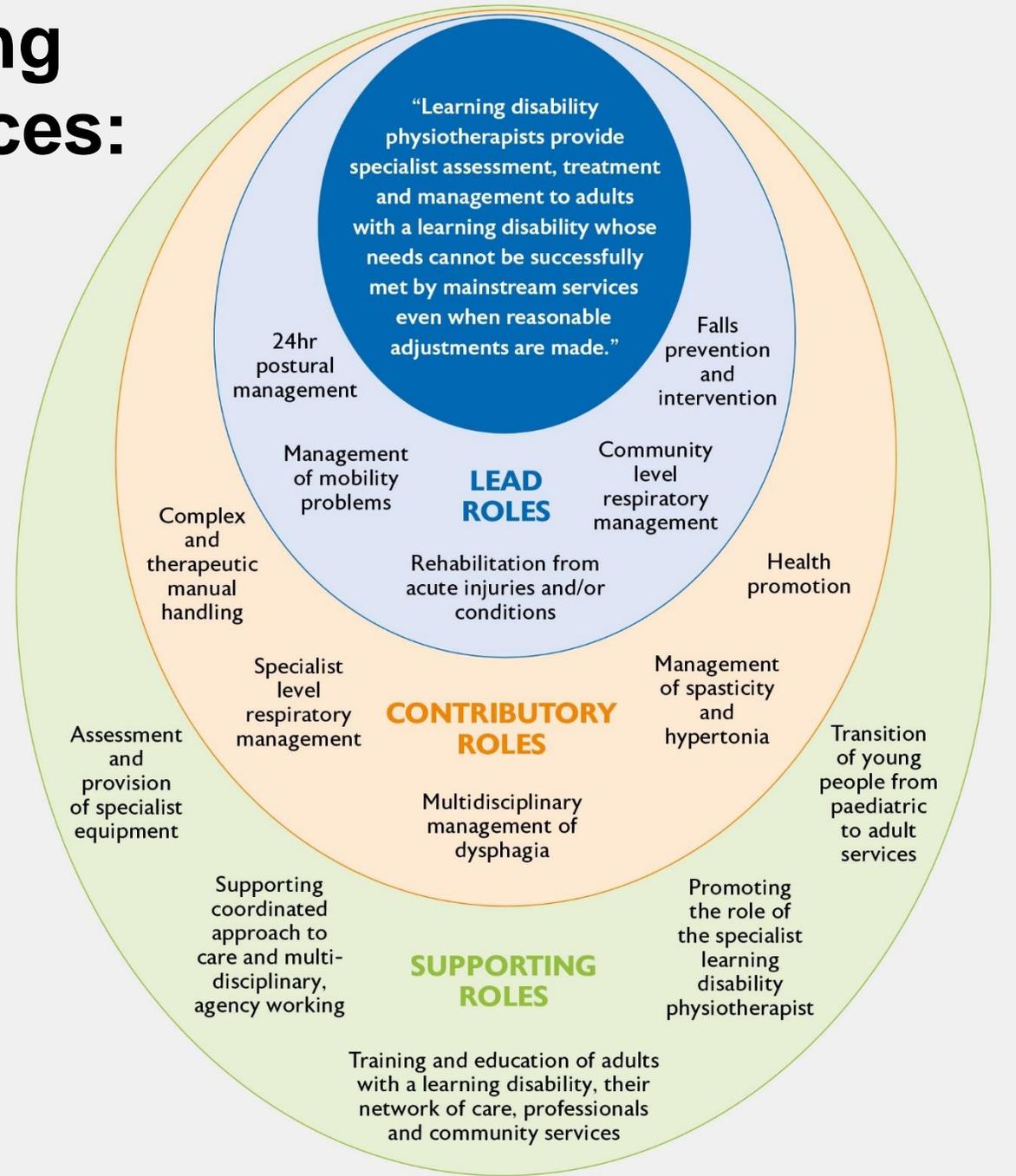
Specialist Adjustments:



The Roles of Specialist Learning Disability Physiotherapy Services:



Lead Roles	Contributory Roles	Supporting Roles
<p>These are the roles that are ESSENTIAL for the specialist learning disability physiotherapist to take responsibility for delivering.</p>	<p>To deliver these roles the specialist learning disability physiotherapist will contribute to and work in collaboration with members of the multidisciplinary team or mainstream services.</p>	<p>These are the roles that underpin the successful provision of the lead and contributory roles of the specialist learning disability physiotherapist.</p>



Physiotherapy needs of adults with a learning disability:



There are a number of factors that predispose this population of people to developing physiotherapy related needs.

These include:

- i. Associated physical impairments and conditions;
- ii. Premature aging;
- iii. Increased risk of injuries and falls;
- iv. Poor health literacy; and
- v. Leading sedentary and unhealthy lifestyles.

As a result, many adults with a learning disability will require access to physiotherapy at some point within their lifetime.

Physiotherapy needs of adults with a learning disability:

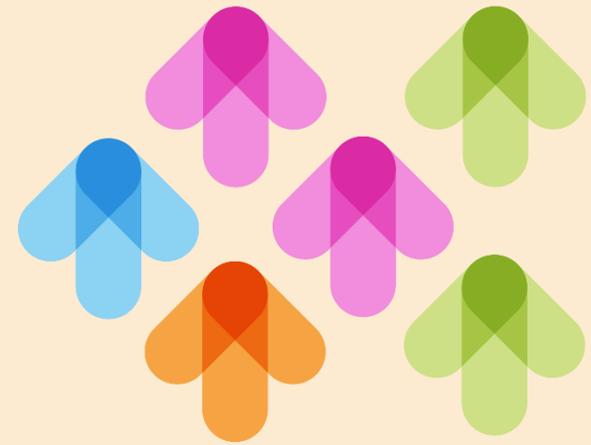
Adults with a learning disability who are unable to successfully access mainstream services even when reasonable adjustments are made may require specialist physiotherapy transiently when problems occur.

For example:

1. To rehabilitate from a fall, musculoskeletal injury or neurological event
2. To manage a long term health condition.

People who are
unable to access
mainstream
services

Service and resource demands



Case Study: Mr L



- Severe Learning Disability, Autism, Sensory processing needs including altered response to pain (high threshold)
- Non verbal.
- Single person service with 2/3:1 staff support
- Significant physical aggression that put himself and others at risk resulting in support staff wearing protective clothing
- Sustained a # to his RIGHT tibia.
- Poor access to and take up of healthcare.
- Referral to physiotherapy for support to access mainstream services and attendance at multi professional planning and BI meetings

The Roles of Specialist Learning Disability Physiotherapy Services:

Commonly:

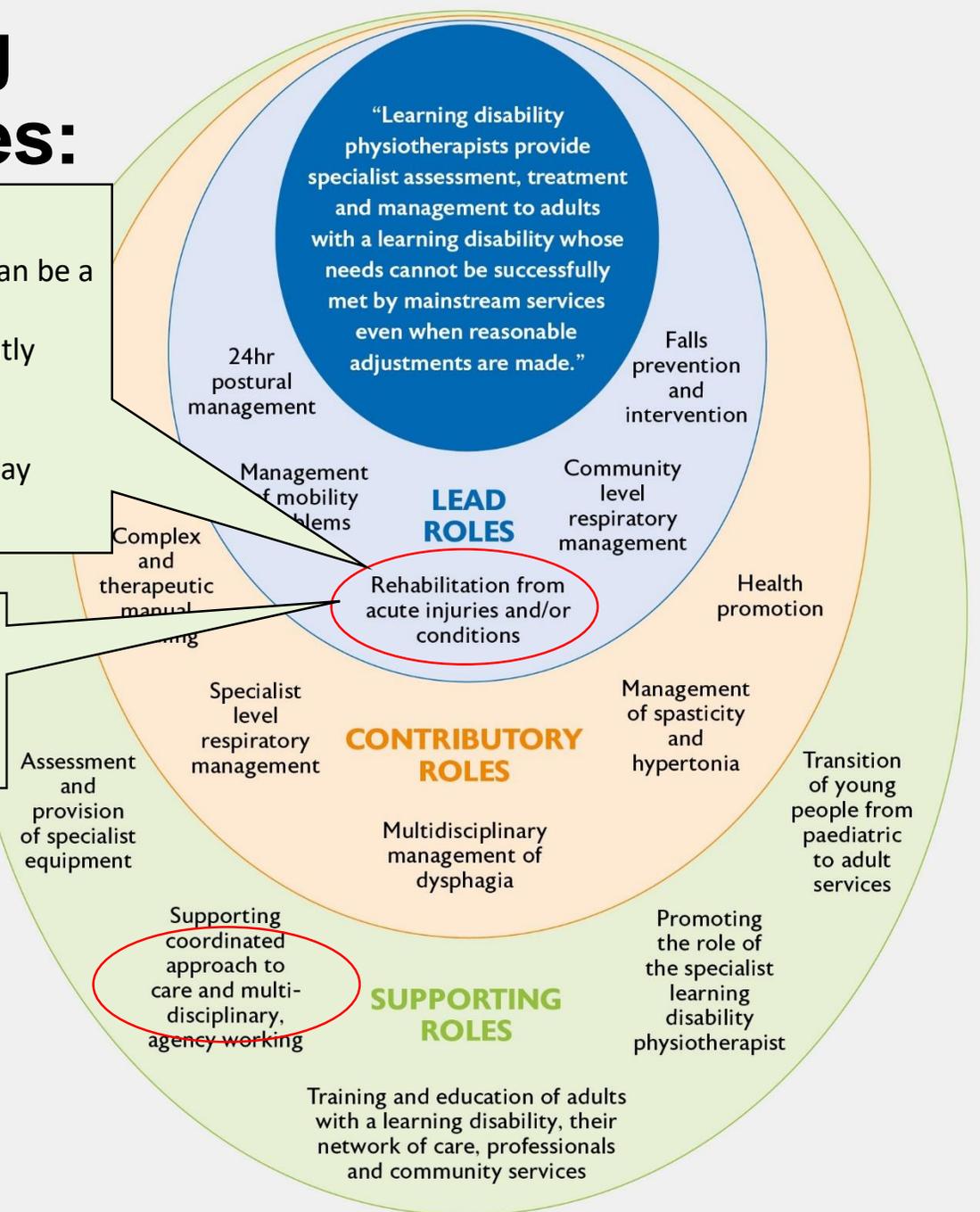
Adults with a learning disability and behaviours that challenge can be a significant barrier to accessing healthcare. Thus, people require support to positively access mainstream healthcare and frequently require specialist learning disability services.

- Approximately, 20-17% adults with a learning disability display behaviours that challenge (Bowring et al. 2019)

Adults with learning disabilities are 14 times more likely to have musculoskeletal impairments the general population (Emerson et al. 2010).

Outcomes:

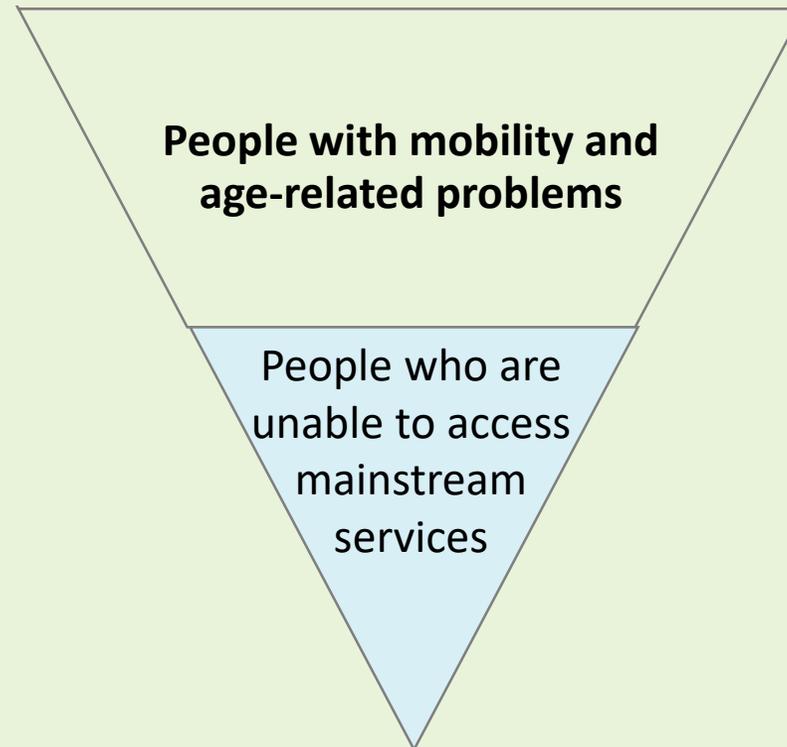
1. Continued to mobilise FWB, therefore healing was at a slower rate.
2. Self injurious behaviour decreased.
3. Injuries to staff decreased.
4. # healed, but took longer than normal.



Physiotherapy needs of adults with a learning disability:



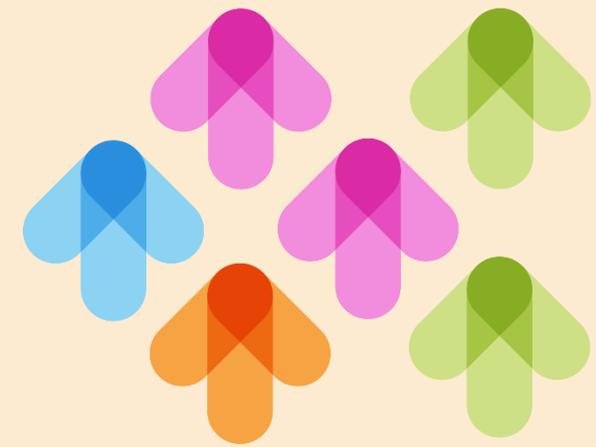
- Individuals with mobility problems are likely to require access to physiotherapy periodically to optimise and maintain their mobility and function.
- Age-related problems arise such as falls and osteoarthritis, can begin much earlier than the general population.



Service and resource demands

Case Study: Miss. W

- Spastic and Dystonic Cerebral Palsy
- Mobile with quad stick indoors
- Electric wheelchair used outdoors
- Transfers via standing
- Attends college
- Needs to be able to walk to continue to live in current house with parents
- Falls at least twice a week
- Experiences significant levels of fatigue
- Referred to physiotherapy re: falls and mobility problems



The Roles of Specialist Learning Disability Physiotherapy Services:

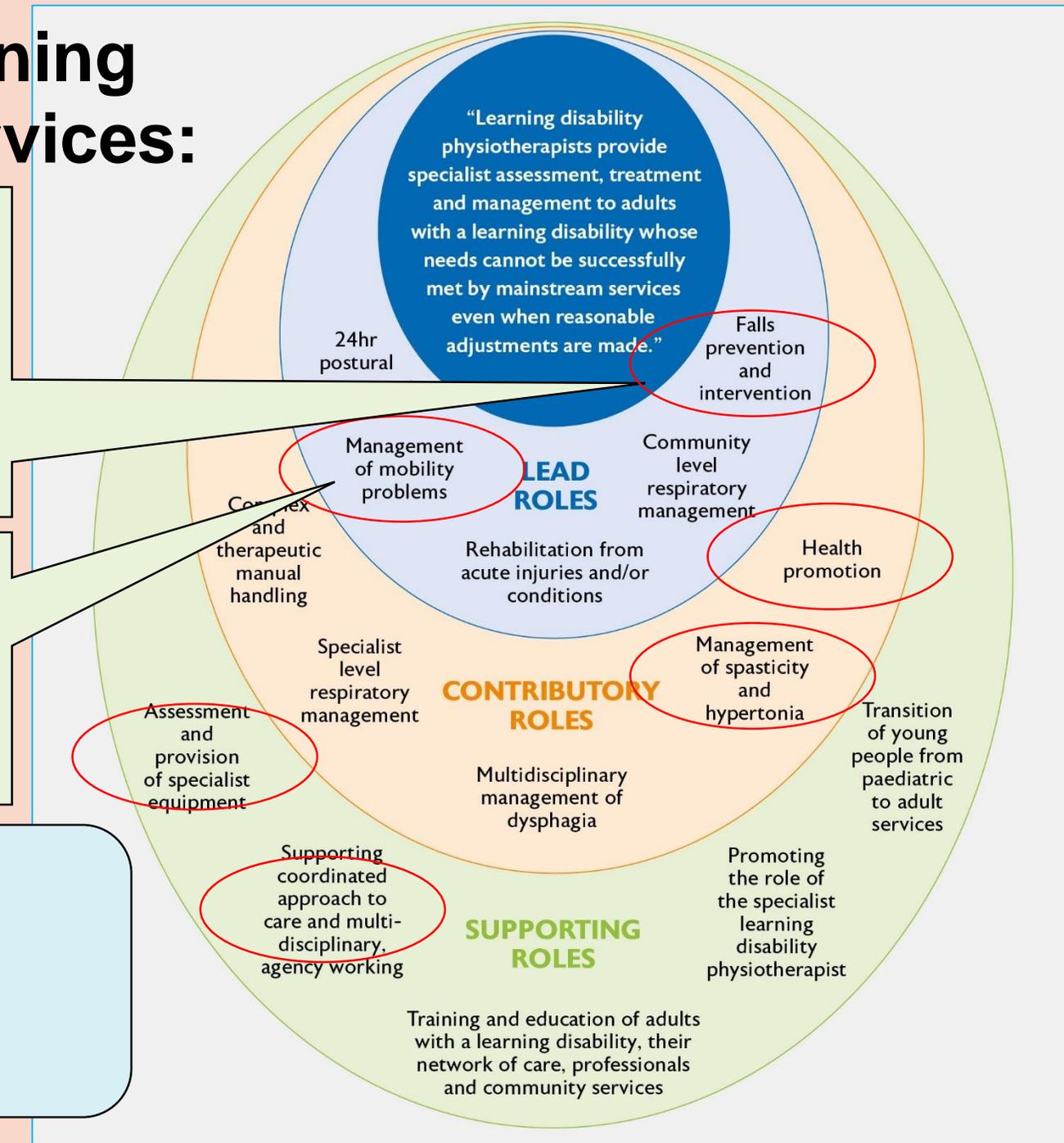
- 25-40% of adults with a learning disability experience at least one fall per year
- 30% of people will injure themselves and 10% of falls result in a fracture or dislocation as a result.
- Falls are the leading cause of injury, including fractures
- **Physiotherapy can reduce number of falls and fear of falling, and improves mobility, health outcomes and quality of life.**

(Public Health England 2019)

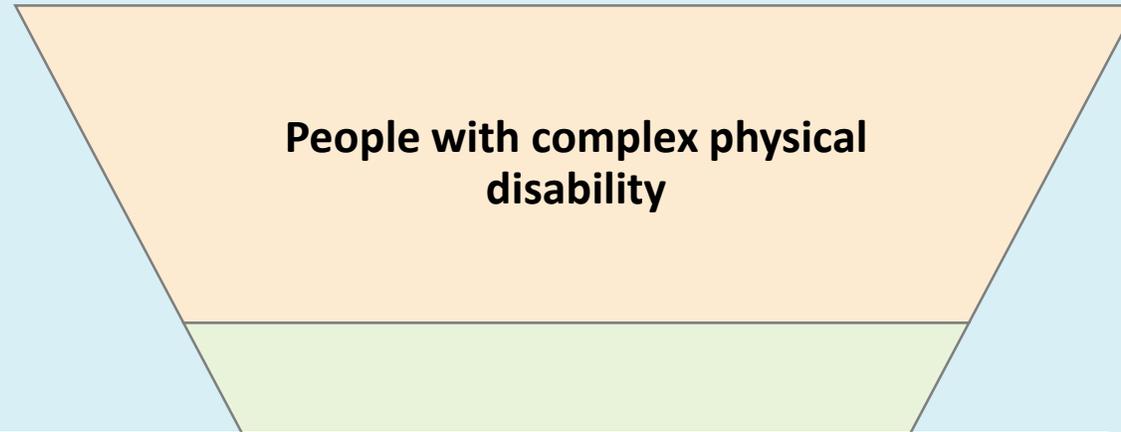
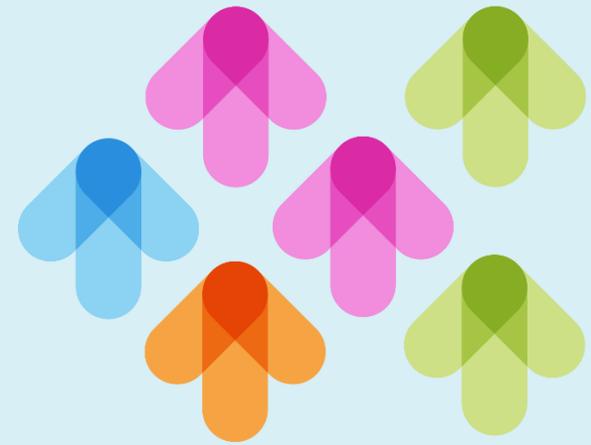
- Balance and gait issues are apparent from an early age and continue across the lifespan, with an age-related decline (Emerson and Baines 2011).
- Partially mobility are at twofold increased risk of early death than those who are fully mobile (Truesdale and Brown 2017).
- **Physiotherapy can prevent deterioration in mobility and maintain functional abilities** (Hocking et al. 2013).

Outcomes:

1. Reduced falls by improving home environment
2. Improved mobility
3. Engaging in increased physical activity
4. Improved fatigue management
5. Able to concentrate more at college



Physiotherapy needs of adults with a learning disability:

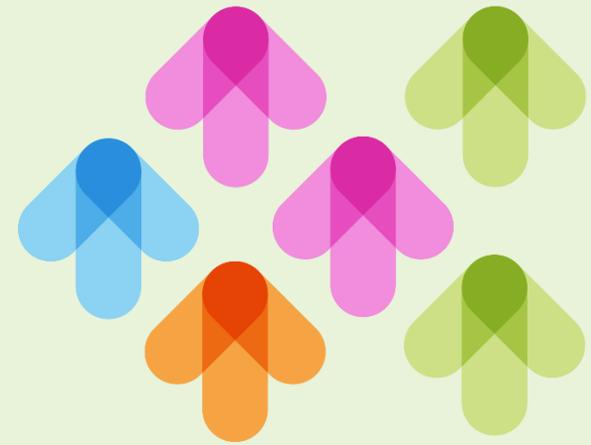


- Severe physical disabilities resulting in postural abnormalities and movement disorders. Individuals require wheelchairs and assistive devices to mobilise.
- Such as severe cerebral palsy and profound and multiple learning disabilities
- Require life-long access to physiotherapy to manage their long-term physical disability and the associated secondary complications.

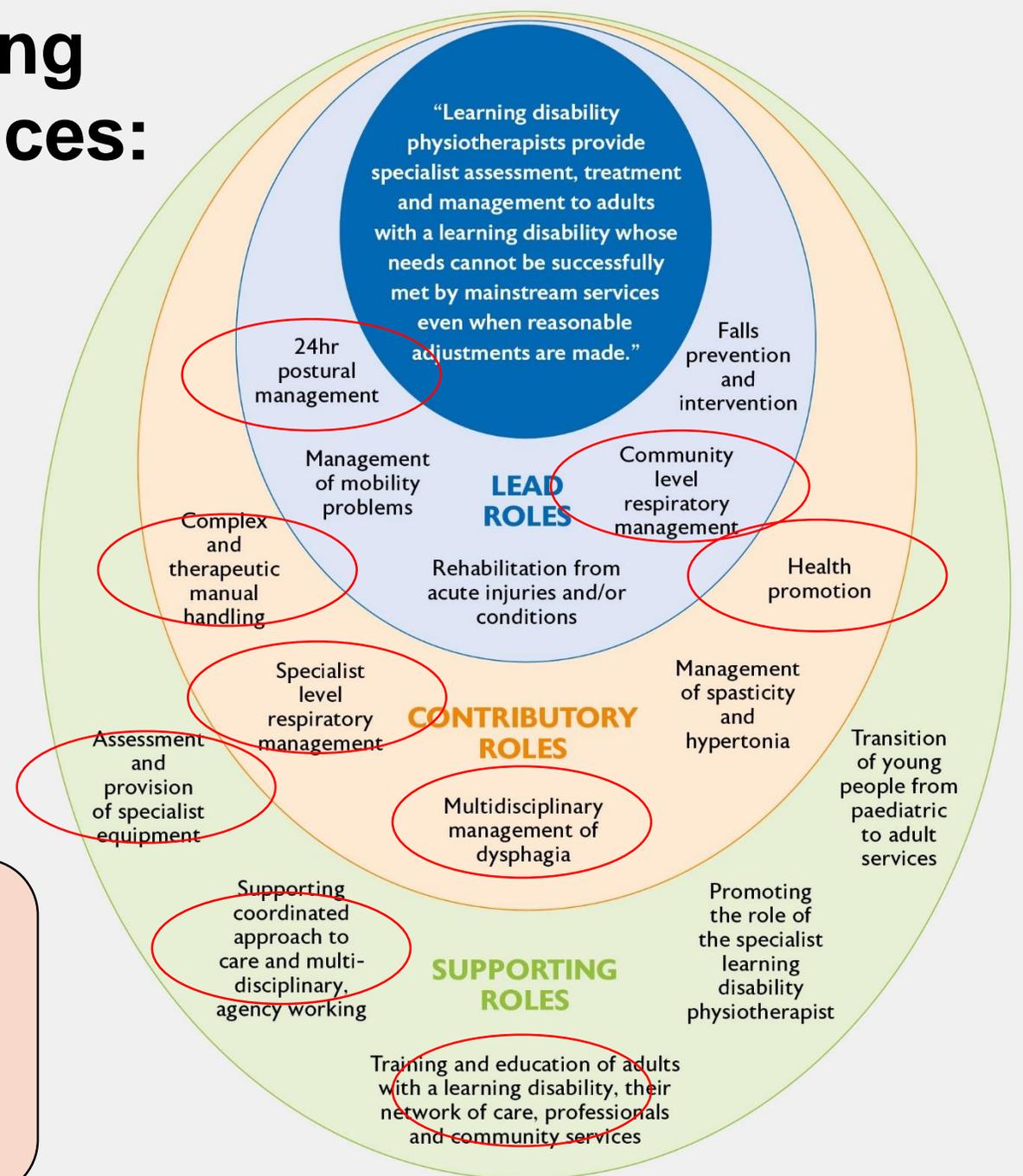


Case Study: Leila

- Complex physical disability: Severe cerebral palsy
 - Kyphoscoliosis and severe contractures
 - Profound learning disability
 - Severe dysphagia
 - Wheelchair user and dependent for all care
-
- Referred to physiotherapy in 2012 due to respiratory health. Requiring chest physiotherapy after each meal at the day centre
 - Bi-yearly reviews via postural management pathway
 - Referral as required



The Roles of Specialist Learning Disability Physiotherapy Services:



Outcomes:

1. Reduce frequency of chest infections
2. No longer requires chest physiotherapy post eating and drinking
3. Increase weight
4. Reduced reliance on mum for all hydration and nutrition
5. Stable posture

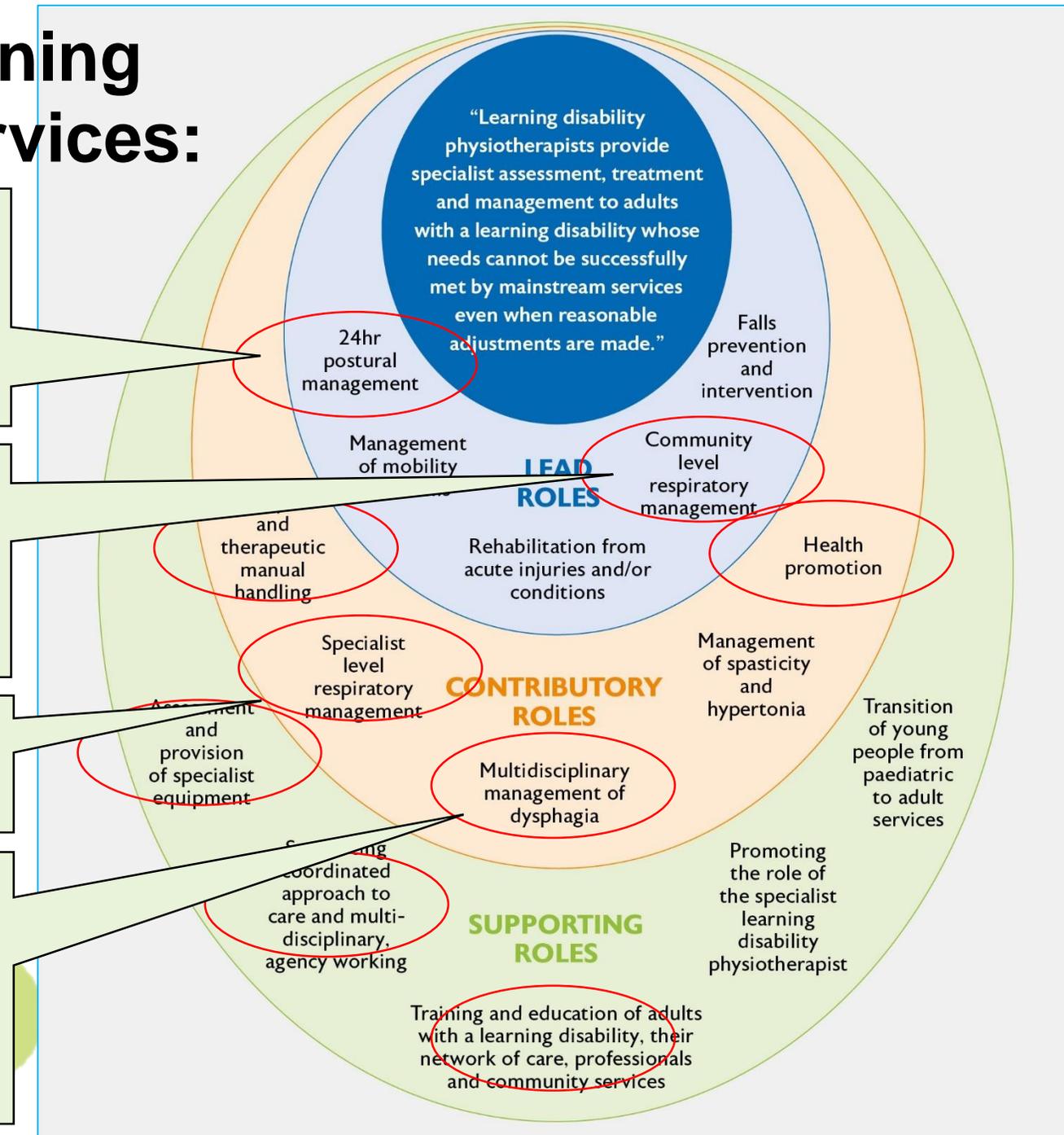
The Roles of Specialist Learning Disability Physiotherapy Services:

- All people with complex physical disability will require postural management.
- Poor postural care can have severe and life-threatening complications (Heslop et al. 2013).
- **24-hour postural management reduces health risks and improves quality of life for individuals** (Public Health England 2018b).

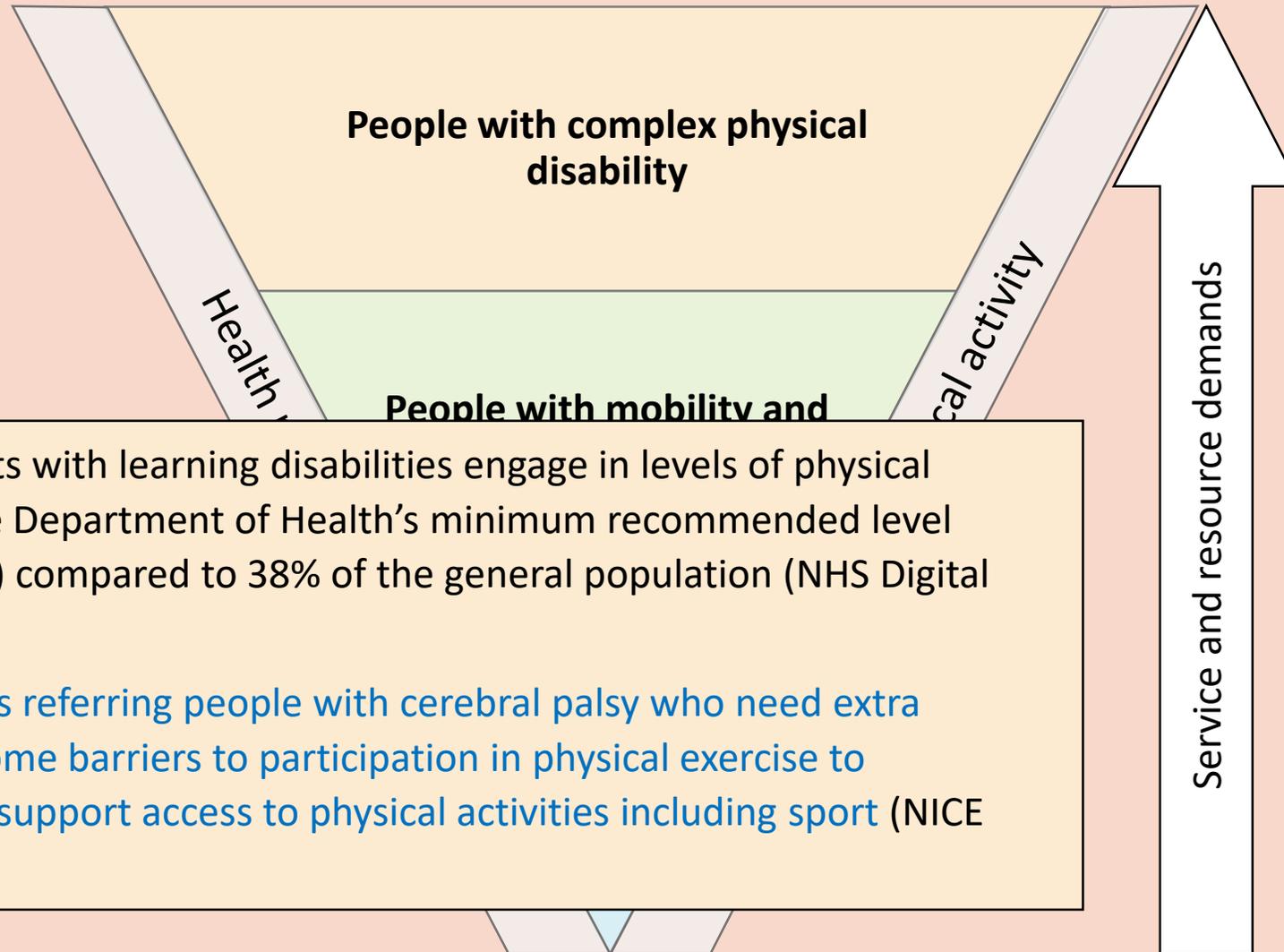
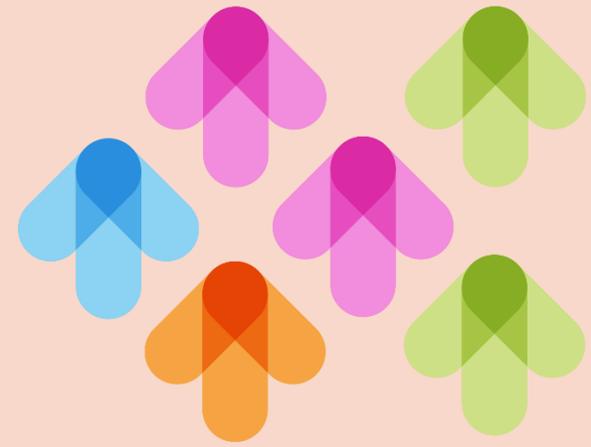
- Respiratory problems are the main reason for primary or secondary medical care, and pneumonia is the most common cause of death (Public Health England 2018b; NICE 2019).
- **Community respiratory physiotherapy service can lead to reduced hospital admissions and reduced hospital bed days** (Wolff et al. 2015)

- People with persistent or multiple signs and symptoms of respiratory impairment; or have risk factors for respiratory impairment should be referred to specialist services (NICE 2019)

- 99% of people with severe Cerebral Palsy have dysphagia. Dysphagia can lead to choking, recurrent chest infections, aspiration pneumonia, weight loss, dehydration, malnutrition, and death (Kim et al. 2013).
- **Physiotherapy play a key role of optimising position for eating and drinking and respiratory health** (NHS England 2018).



Physiotherapy needs of adults with a learning disability:



- Over 80% of adults with learning disabilities engage in levels of physical activity below the Department of Health's minimum recommended level (Dairo et al. 2016) compared to 38% of the general population (NHS Digital 2017).
- NICE recommends referring people with cerebral palsy who need extra support to overcome barriers to participation in physical exercise to physiotherapy to support access to physical activities including sport (NICE 2019)

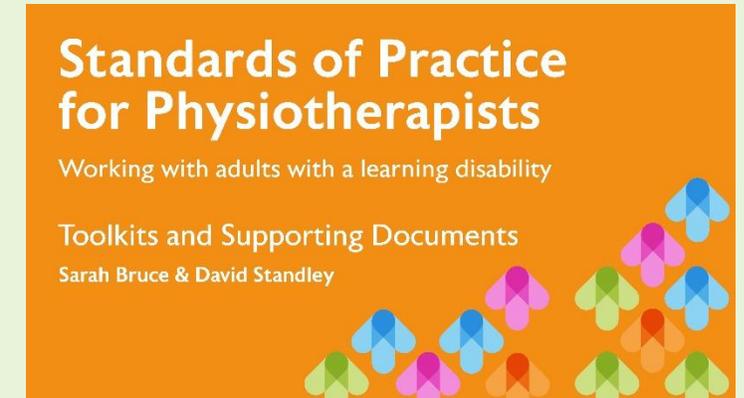
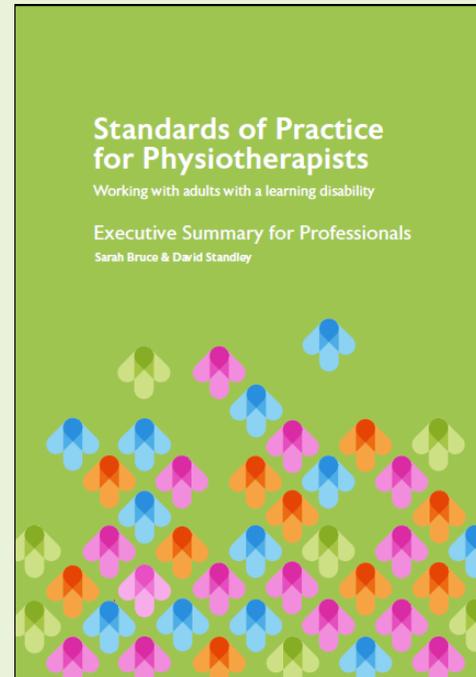
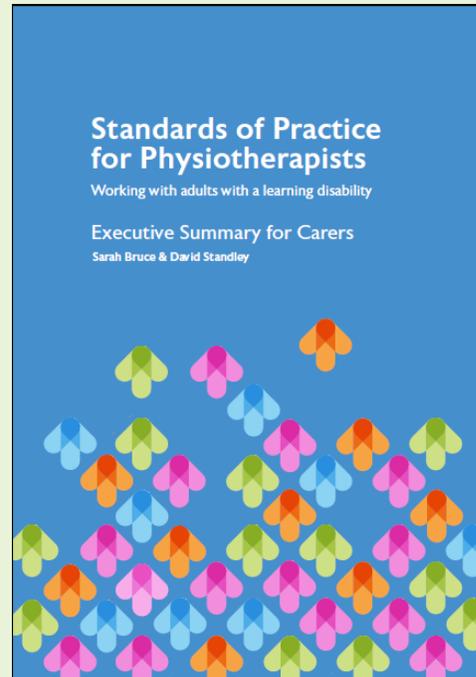
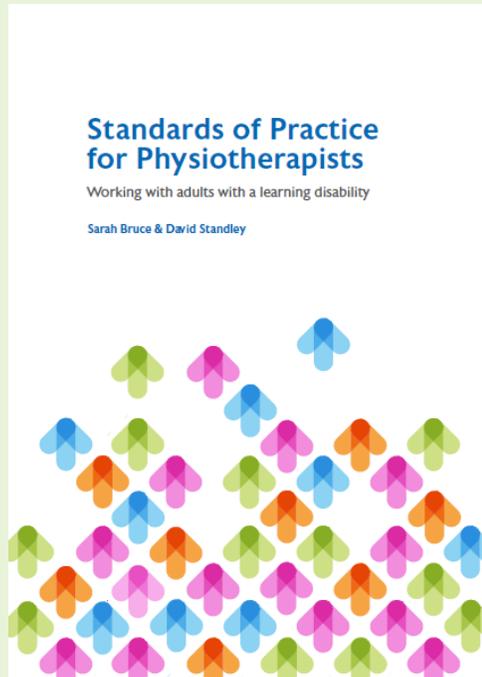
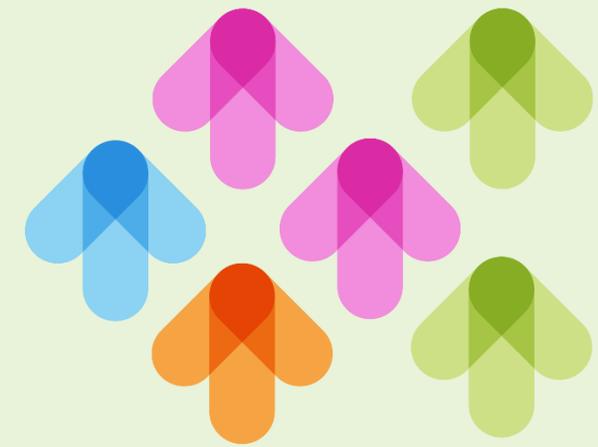
Conclusion:

Specialist learning disability physiotherapists



- Make the adjustments required to provide successful physiotherapy to people with a learning disability that go beyond what is reasonable and possible for mainstream services.
- Are an essential part of the community learning disability team and are critical to meeting the health and physiotherapy needs of adults with a learning disability.
- Have a positive impact on the health outcomes; quality of care; and experiences of adults with a learning disability and their care network, as well as reducing the cost for health and social care.
- Must be appropriately resourced and staffed to ensure that people with a learning disability are accessing and receiving the specialist physiotherapy they require to meet their needs.

Any Questions ???



<https://acpld.csp.org.uk/standards-of-practice>