MODERATE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES
UNIT 11
SOCIAL ASPECTS OF MLD

This unit addresses the perceptions and attitudes of pupils identified with moderate learning difficulties. You will be asked to locate some readings and identify the key points as to how pupils with MLD feel about themselves and the labels often used to describe them. Lastly you will reflect on your own perspectives of people who are identified as having MLD, you will consider their strengths, the areas of difficulty and identify the likely perceptions others held about them. The learning outcomes for this unit are:

The expected learning outcomes
As a result of studying this unit, you will:
- Explore the attitudes and perceptions of pupils with MLD in order to be better able to relate to their experiences at school
- Explore your own perceptions and values in relation to what it means to have MLD

ONLINE RESOURCES

The content and tasks throughout these PDFs are supported by online resources that are designed to facilitate and supplement your training experience.

Links to these are signposted where appropriate. The resources use graphics and interactive elements to:

- Highlight salient points

- Provide at-a-glance content summaries

- Introduce further points of interest

- Offer visual context

- Break down and clearly present the different stages and elements of processes, tasks, practices, and theories

The online resources offer great benefits, both for concurrent use alongside the PDFs, or as post-reading revision and planning aids.

Please note that the resources cannot be used in isolation without referencing the PDFs. Their purpose is to complement and support your training process, rather than lead it.

You should complete any learning or teaching tasks and additional reading detailed in this PDF to make full use of the Advanced training materials for autism; dyslexia; speech, language and communication; emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; moderate learning difficulties.

To find out more about the resources, how they work, and how they can enhance your training, visit the homepage at: www.education.gov.uk/lamb

The first resource for this unit can be found here:
www.education.gov.uk/lamb/mld/social-aspects/intro

Introduction to Tasks 1-3
Tasks 1-3 are an exploration of the perspectives of pupils with MLD compiled through interview studies, and will support you to better relate to their experiences of special provision, the SEN label and their social relationships in which bullying can play a prominent role. This knowledge will support you to follow the SEN Code of Practice guidelines on seeking pupil views as you become more aware of what is important to pupils with MLD.

BRIEFING 1: ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF PUPILS WITH MLD TO LEARNING SUPPORT
In a study carried out by Norwich and Kelly (2005), the majority of pupils with MLD interviewed expressed positive perceptions of their teachers and TAs, though a significant minority held mixed views. None expressed entirely negative views.

See online resource:
www.education.gov.uk/lamb/mld/social-aspects/evaluating-teachers

Pupils in mainstream schools held mostly positive views about special schools, whereas pupils in special schools held mostly negative views about mainstream schools, where many had previously attended and had negative experiences.

See online resource:
www.education.gov.uk/lamb/mld/social-aspects/mainstream-special-schools

Similar percentages preferred withdrawal, in-class and small group support – saying that quality of teaching, reduced distraction and less bullying were reasons they valued withdrawal. This latter perspective goes against some assumptions about reluctance by pupils to leave the classroom, and the finding overall suggests seeking pupil perspective is an important aspect of support.

See online resource:
www.education.gov.uk/lamb/mld/social-aspects/provision-views

Unit 2B, Leadership – working with Teaching Assistants (TAs) provides a comprehensive overview of the research relating to the effectiveness of teaching assistants.

Task 1

Reading, summary and critical synthesis: Attitudes and perceptions of pupils with MLD to learning support

Please read the following excerpt:

> Norwich & Kelly (2005) pp67-97

On writing frame 4.1 below complete a record of key points. Pay particular attention to areas which show a range of responses by pupils as these may signal issues which it is most important to consult pupils about.

Writing frame 4.1. Attitudes and perceptions of pupils with MLD to learning support

Key Point	Summary and critical synthesis
Other studies exploring pupil perceptions of support	
SEN Code of Practice: seeking pupil views	
Design of Norwich/Kelly study	
Pupil perspectives on present school & provision	
Pupil perspectives about TAs and teachers	
Pupil perspectives about support	

Quality and Quantity of help with learning	
Waiting for help	
Sources of help	
Mainstream support	
Mainstream pupils' view of special school	
Special school pupils' view of mainstream school	

BRIEFING

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF PUPILS WITH MLD TO THEMSELVES AND TO LABELS

Previous studies interviewing pupils with SEN suggest that young people construct self-perceptions in response to the views of others, including teachers, parents and peers. The study by Norwich and Kelly (2005) found that self-perceptions were more positive in special schools than mainstream schools, though self-perceptions in mainstream schools were not uniformly low but rather mixed, suggesting it was possible for some pupils to learn how to perceive themselves positively when comparing themselves to mainstream pupils. Pupils with MLD were sensitive to labels, responding negatively to terms such as 'thick' and 'stupid', however some pupils found terms that linked to support and help were more favourably perceived. This study highlights the possibility for positive and constructive self-perceptions in pupils with MLD and that it is possible to use labels in a way that supports rather than hinders, though these results were specific to individuals rather than universal.

See online resources:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/mld/social-aspects/labels-views

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/mld/social-aspects/terminology

Task 2

Reading, summary and critical synthesis: Attitudes and perceptions of pupils with MLD to themselves and to labels

Please read the following excerpt:

1) Norwich & Kelly (2005) pp98-119

On writing frame 4.2 below complete a record of key points. What did pupils find harmful vs. helpful? What explanations can you think of to account for differences?

Writing frame 4.2. Attitudes and perception of pupils with MLD with regards to themselves and to labels

Key Point	Summary and critical synthesis
Other studies exploring pupil self- perceptions and view of labels	
Aims/design of Norwich/Kelly study	
Pupil awareness of difficulties	
Minimisation of difficulties	
Perception of academic abilities	
General self- perceptions	
Perceptions about how others see them	

Response to labels	

Feelings about labels
   Stupid and thick
   Receiving help
   Special Needs	

Perceptions of what is good and/or bad about using labels	

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF PUPILS WITH MLD TO SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Previous studies interviewing pupils with SEN suggest that they are more likely to be rejected by peers, however they also demonstrate that it is possible for them to experience various combinations of positive relationships, for example, best friend, regular friend or guest; these may shift over time. Social skills of the pupil and the ethos of the learning environment can both contribute to the quality of the relationships that pupils develop.

Task 3
Reading, summary and critical synthesis: attitudes and perceptions of pupils with MLD to social relationships

Please read the following excerpt/journal article:
1) Norwich & Kelly (2005), pp120-137
2) Frederickson & Furnam (2001)

On writing frame 4.3 below, complete a record of key points. How do these findings compare to the bullying you have been aware of in school settings? If different, what reasons would you give for the differences? How would you describe the ethos of the schools in which you have worked and what impact do you believe this had on bullying?

Writing frame 4.3. Attitudes and perceptions of pupils with MLD to social relationships

Key Point	Summary and critical synthesis
Norwich & Kelly: Other studies that look at social relationships	
Name-calling/bullying Incidence and form Targets for bullying Sources of bullying	

Feelings/ consequences	
Social in-groups/out-groups	
Frederickson & Furnham: Other studies that look at social relationships	
Aims and design of study	
MLD classification as popular/rejected	

Briefing
Your perceptions of someone you have known with MLD, and how you think others perceived them

It stands to reason that many teachers teach because they get satisfaction from helping children learn. What does this mean in relation to teaching pupils with MLD? Pupils with MLD make slower progress than their peers, and they often do not reach national targets, lowering attainment results on which schools can be judged. What then, do teachers gain from teaching pupils with MLD?

This issue raises questions about diversity and values. Is there value in educating pupils with MLD alongside those without MLD? What makes a pupil valuable? What rights does a pupil with MLD have with regards to learning and teaching? What makes teaching worthwhile?

Diversity draws attention both to what is different, and what is common. Pupils with MLD are valuable as human beings, with perceptions, experiences and feelings, in

the same way that every person is. With less emphasis on attainment can come an appreciation of process, of being, that can be lost in competitive situations.

In this task you are asked to explore your perceptions of someone you have known with MLD at any time during your lifetime, for example during your childhood or a pupil with MLD whom you have taught. What strengths and weaknesses did you perceive this person to have? How do you think other people perceived this person? What values do you think underpinned positive and negative perceptions?

Task 4. Mindmap recording your perceptions of someone you have known with MLD, and how you think others perceived them. What personal strengths and weaknesses do you perceive this person to have? How are these valued or denigrated by others?

Person with MLD   **Perceptions of others**

Strengths		Positive

Person with MLD

Weaknesses		Negative
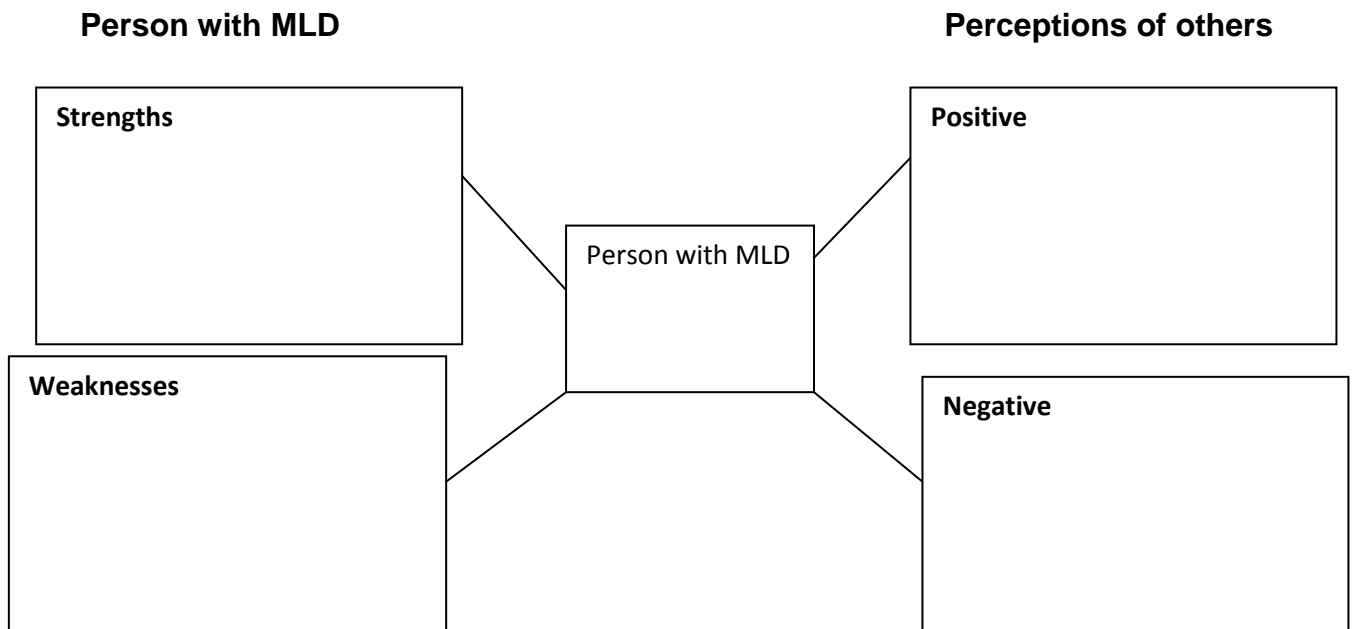
References
Bakker, JTA, Denessen, E, Bosman, AMT, Krijger, E and Bouts, L (2007)

Sociometric status and self-image of children with specific and general learning disabilities in Dutch general and special education classes, *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 30, 47-61

Carter, EW, Hughes, C, Guth, CB and Copeland, SR (2005) Factors Influencing Social Interaction Among High School Students with Intellectual Disabilities and their General Education Peers, *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 110(5), 366-377

Frederickson, NL & Furnham, AF (2001) The Long-term Stability of Sociometric Status Classification: A Longitudinal Study of Included Pupils who have Moderate Learning Difficulties and their Mainstream Peers, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 42(5), 581-592

Norwich, B & Kelly, N (2005) *Moderate Learning Difficulties and the Future of Inclusion*. London: RoutledgeFarmer