Connect for Change: an update on learning disability services in England

Making sure people with learning disabilities get better care and support
Who we are

We are the Royal College of Nursing (RCN).

We support nurses, people training to be a nurse, midwives and health care assistants.

We give them advice and support and help make their work the best it can be.

What is this report about?

This report is about care and support for people with learning disabilities and their families.

Some bad things happened to people with learning disabilities at a hospital called Winterbourne View.
Some people with learning disabilities lived there. They were treated very badly.

After the problems at Winterbourne View there were lots of plans and promises to change things.

But not much has changed in the last 5 years.

Many children and adults with learning disabilities still do not get the right care and support.

This report looks at what is going wrong and what needs to change.
The Government said that people who do not need to be in these hospitals should move to somewhere better.

They should move to somewhere in the community near their family and friends.

The Government said this would happen by July 2014. But it has not happened yet.

Now there are plans that talk about:

- moving people out of hospitals to live in the community
- better care and support for people in their local areas

People in local areas should be working to make these plans happen.
1. There are not enough health staff who know how to work with people with learning disabilities.

For example, there are not enough learning disability nurses.

These nurses know a lot about learning disability.

They know how to support people with learning disabilities in the right way.

They can help people with learning disabilities have a better life.

5 years ago there were more nurses like this working for the NHS in England.

But now there are far less.
2. There are not enough people training to be a learning disability nurse.

This means there will be even less learning disability nurses in the future.

3. There is less money from the Government to pay for learning disability nurses and training to be a learning disability nurse.

4. The NHS now runs less learning disability services.

Other groups that are not part of the NHS run them instead.

This means many learning disability nurses do not work for the NHS any more.

Many nurses say this is worse for them.
All of these things are a big problem.

Care and support for people with learning disabilities and their families needs to get better.

For this to happen there needs to be:

- enough good staff who can support people with learning disabilities in the right way
- good care and support for people in their local areas now and in the future
- enough money to make this happen
Learning disability staff

We think there should be:

- a plan to make sure there are enough good staff to make the changes happen

- more learning disability nurses. NHS groups that run hospitals should have at least one learning disability nurse working for them

- training for other nurses so they can give people with learning disabilities and autism the right care

- more training for people to be a learning disability nurse

This means there will be more learning disability nurses in the future
Care and support

We think there should be:

- good care and support in local areas for people moving out of hospital

- plans to make sure there is good care and support for people now and in the future

- support for children and adults that helps stop problems before they start

We also want new support for people who have behaviour that challenges.

These are people who may find it hard to show how they feel.
They may want to hurt themselves or others or damage things to show that something is wrong for them.

Learning disability nurses can help give this support.

They can also help other nurses have the right skills to care for people with learning disabilities.
Joe’s story

Joe is 40 years old. He loves being out and about and has a great sense of humour.

Joe has a learning disability and needs a lot of support. He does not use many words to communicate.

Joe was living with a friend.

Then some of the staff who supported him left.

Joe was upset about this but did not get the right support after that. This made the problem worse.

He was taken somewhere else to live because he got very upset. This place was very far away.

It took 2 years and lots of hard work to get Joe back home.
Joe now lives in his own home with support.

But his family are worried.

They say there are not enough checks to make sure Joe is OK.

For example, there is no leaning disability nurse who knows him well and can help if something goes wrong.

Other staff are very busy. They may not be able to help Joe straight away if there is a big problem.

His family say Joe should get more support to check he is OK and to stop problems from getting worse.

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