



Dear Keir Starmer, Ed Davey, Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay

Human Rights abuses of people with learning disabilities and autistic people.



We are a group of people and organisations that either have lived experience, give support to people, are professionals or are families of children and adults with learning disabilities or who are autistic.



Together we support and speak to many thousands of children and adults with learning disabilities or who are autistic.



As you will know, there have been many scandals showing the neglect and human rights abuses for this group of people for many years because:



- Health and Social Care services have failed people with learning disabilities and autistic people



- There isn't enough local community support



- There are 'closed cultures' – this is when Health and Social Care services are breaching people's human rights and are abusing them. For example they may stop families and friends visiting, or make people visiting feel unwelcome so they no longer visit.



- People may be separated for example in a room on their own without been able to talk to people. Or been told to do things by their staff at certain times and not been able to change the routine.
- People buy the wrong services and support which is away from people's homes and causes them harm



The abuse that has been made public such as [Winterbourne View](#) and [Whorlton Hall](#), the [Joint Committee on Human Rights' report on the detention of young people with a learning disability and/or autism](#), [NHS England's Safe and Wellbeing Reviews](#), and [CQC's 'Out of Sight' report on restraint, seclusion and segregation](#)) have all shown the same problems.



The hospitals and poor care settings are very expensive, are paid for by everyone in England and nobody really knows what happens in them.



In 2012 the Government said it would “transform care” for people with learning disabilities and autistic people who do not receive the community support they need and then end up as inpatients in mental health hospitals getting the wrong care.



But, 11 years on:



- The plan to lower the number of children and adults in the wrong settings have been set and missed for the past 10 years.



- Over 2,000 people still live in locked settings where they stay for an average of five and a half years.



- Recent research by Mencap shows that the recent plan to halve inpatients by March 2024 will not happen until November 2028 at the earliest.



- The National Autistic Society says that instead of going down, the number of autistic people in these hospitals has gone up. In 2015, 38% of people in inpatient care were autistic – in May 2023, this figure was 65%



- We know that most inpatients could be living safely and well in their own homes; we have many examples where people who were told they could not live outside hospital, now live in their own homes.



- Since the abuse uncovered at Winterbourne View Hospital, abuse, harm and poor care has continued and there have been other abuse made public such as Cawston Park, Whorlton Hall and Edenfield. Other reports have show this still happens (Joint Committee on Human Rights [2019](#), [2020](#); Health and Social Care Committee, [2021](#); CQC ([2020](#), [2021](#))).



- We have seen little evidence that the new Integrated Care Boards have plans to help people to move out of hospitals or to stop people from going into hospital.



- Many reports have found that people with a learning disability and autistic people who are in inpatient settings don't get their voices heard and cannot get good quality independent advocacy services which the law says they should have.



- This Government has not made human rights a priority, and people with a learning disability and autistic people [continue to have their rights violated.](#)



This national failure is because there has not been good leadership, without a good plan and not enough money for community support.



Everyone agrees that good community support and services are needed to stop people going into mental health hospitals when they don't need to. There also isn't enough support to support quick discharges from inpatient services. But there is not enough money or planning to make this happen.



Instead the government has tried to fix problems when they happen, which costs more money and damages peoples lives.



There should be more people looking at this, called 'regulators' who can see what is happening and make sure people who abuse and badly treat people cannot carry on making money from providing bad services.



We know change can happen, we just need our government and political leaders to make it happen by doing things like:

- Providing children and adults with learning disabilities, and autistic children and adults with the support and services they need, including a named social worker.
- Having leaders in government that understand why everyone needs to be included and live in community.
- Having leaders who will champion and deliver on promises to transform care for individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people.





We are looking for your party to commit to:



- Planning and funding the right support in the right place at the right time – so that care for this group of individuals really will be changed for the better.



- Using your knowledge and expertise of individuals with lived experience as well as other people you know to make a good plan.



- Meeting with us, so we can help you co-produce your plans for people with learning disabilities and autistic people.



Co-produced work has been started by families frustrated and angered by the Government's slow action. We would be happy to work with you to develop this more.



We hope you will accept this offer to work together and meet with us to talk about what we can do in partnership to transform care.



We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Parry, England Director, Association for Real Change

Adam Micklethwaite, Director, Autism Alliance

Maris Stratulis, National Director, British Association of Social Workers (BASW England)

Ben Higgins, CEO, BILD

Vivien Cooper, Chief Executive, The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Kate Chate, Scott Watkin BEM, Jack Marshall BEM and Tim Keilty, Members Representative Co-Chairs, Learning Disability England

Professor Ashok Roy, Co-Chair, Learning Disability Professional Senate

Caroline Stevens, Chief Executive, National Autistic Society

Restraint Reduction Network

Julie Newcombe, Co-Founder, Rightful Lives

Speakup Self Advocacy

Dr Rhidian Hughes, Chief Executive, Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (VODG)

Jonathan Senker, Chief Executive, VoiceAbility

