

Press Release

For Immediate Publication

A new report published today by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) has highlighted the challenges in supporting and encouraging change to private sector learning disability hospitals.

The report is a conclusion from an eighteen month¹ DH funded project designed to encourage private sector providers of learning disability hospitals to change their services to reflect national policy². The project aims included reducing the number of such hospital beds, people with learning disabilities leaving the hospitals for community services and providers developing alternative service models.

The project made limited progress with these goals and work identified a number of particular challenges to achieving this, including:

- A lack of desire by most private sector hospital providers to change their services whilst a market for them in their current form still existed
- That financial return to the organisation was a greater driver than the delivery of national learning disability policy
- Whilst some private sector providers and staff do wish to change the hospital services, the current challenging economic climate is making it increasingly difficult for them to do this whilst also achieving financial returns for the organisation – and hence change is not taking place.
- That local commissioners therefore hold the key to changing learning disability hospital provision but that, at present, there are insufficient levers in the system to make this a priority for NHS and local authority commissioners.

Rob Greig, NDTi Chief Executive who led this work commented:

“The recent abuse of people with learning disabilities highlighted by Panorama shows why the change that this project was intended to help achieve is needed. The learning from this work highlights the important roles of Government and local commissioners in changing such hospitals, as the market on its own clearly will not result in that. A programme such as that described in the letter from 86 learning disability organisations to the Prime Minister following the Panorama programme

¹ The project was started and completed prior to the recent Panorama programme highlighting abuse in a learning disability hospital in Bristol.

² Government policy for people who challenge is set out in Valuing People Now and the Mansell Report. It recommends individualised local services for people with complex needs rather than congregate hospital settings. As part of progressing this, the Government has already closed down all NHS run learning disability hospitals.

will be important if the people who currently live in such institutions are to be given a chance of a life with positive outcomes³

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For further information contact Rob Greig on 01225 789135 or 07789 653174.

For a copy of the full report please go to <http://www.ndti.org.uk/publications/ndti-publications/supporting-change-in-private-sector-learning-disability-hospitals/>

Notes to Editors:

The initiative was commissioned by the DH in 2009 as part of the Valuing People Now 'Local Services' work strand. Work with providers (described in detail in the report) undertaken from late 2009 to late 2010.

The NDTi will be releasing its own commentary on the implications of this work for learning disability services (as referred to in paragraph 10 of the report) in early September.

About NDTi:

- NDTi is a not-for-profit organisation that promotes inclusion and equality for people who are at risk of exclusion from any part of society – and who may need support to lead a full life. Formed in April 2009 by the integration of the National Development Team and the Older People's Programme, NDTi's main work is centred on issues around age, disability and health.
- Examples of the organisations that the NDTi is currently working with include: the Department of Health, the Department for Education, Joseph Rowntree foundation and numerous local authorities, NHS and third sector organisations across the UK
- Other examples of the recent and current NDTi work include:
 - Developing commissioning good practice guidance for the DH around services for people who challenge
 - NDTi being one of the partner organisations delivering the Learning Disability Public Health Observatory
 - Developing good practice advice in delivering the personalisation agenda for the mental health and older people's fields (for the DH)
 - Developing an Age Discrimination toolkit for the NHS and local government on behalf of the Department of Health
 - Evaluating the Government's Short Breaks for Disabled Children initiative
 - Facilitating a national programme of learning events for the DH on the transition to adulthood for young people with learning disabilities

³ The letter to the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister's response, is available at: <http://www.ndti.org.uk/news/national-news/>