

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release - August 16, 2011

Prime Minister says 'joint plan of action is needed' to improve learning disability services

The Prime Minister, David Cameron, has stated that he was "appalled at the horrific catalogue of abuses uncovered at Winterbourne View" in the recent Panorama Programme.

Replying to the 86 organisations that wrote to him with a proposed plan of action in response to the issues raised by that abuse, the Prime Minister gave assurances that action is underway to ensure that lessons are learnt. He stated that "*A joint plan of action is needed both locally and nationally to drive improvements in services and determine how the lessons from Winterbourne View can influence future policy and practice*". He concluded by stating that the Government is "*committed to taking all necessary action to minimise the chance of such terrible event recurring*"

In inviting the signatories to discuss their ideas further with the Department of Health, Mr. Cameron also undertook to ensure that the views of the National Forum of People with learning Disabilities and the National Valuing Families Forum inform the reviews currently being undertaken by the Department of Health.

Commenting on the Prime Minister's reply, Rob Greig, Chief Executive at the National Development Team for Inclusion said "It is extremely encouraging to read that the Prime Minister recognises the need for a coordinated national and local plan of action. The issues highlighted through the Panorama programme will not be resolved just by relying upon the goodwill of local people to do things better"

Alison Giraud Saunders, Co-Director at the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities said: "The results of the Care Quality Commission review of Castlebeck's other services reinforce the need for a step change in the quality of services commissioned for people like those who were placed at Winterbourne View. We will continue to press for action."

ENDS

For further information, please contact:

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Or

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Or

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Prime Minister's letter was in reply to a letter signed by 86 leading people and organisations in the learning disability field, calling upon the Government to take action in response to the abuse of people with learning disabilities identified by Panorama on May 31st.

The full letter from the Prime Minister is available at <http://www.thecbf.org.uk/pdf/PMReplyAug8th.pdf>

The full letter from the 86 organisations is available at:

<http://www.thecbf.org.uk/pdf/AnationalresponsetotheabuseofpeoplewithlearningdisabilitiesJuly22v4.pdf>

Amongst other things, the letter called for:

- A national two year programme to support local change that would lead to better services for people with learning disabilities who are labeled as 'challenging'
- The introduction of evidence based guidelines that effectively prevent commissioners from purchasing places in learning disability hospitals other than for short-term assessment and treatment in local facilities
- A framework of actions to improve the quality of services in such institutions prior to their closure
- National monitoring of how the use of such institutional facilities is reduced over time
- The availability of independent advocacy for all people who are placed in services away from their home community
- CQC to establish more effective multi-component systems for assessing service quality including the capacity and skills to review commissioners as well as providers.