

29/10/12

**“Great intentions, but its time for Government action”
Mencap and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation comment on new Panorama
programme investigating further abuse allegations**

Following the jailing of six people for abusing people with learning disabilities in the Winterbourne View assessment and treatment centre, Mencap and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation are calling for the government to commit to real change to stop people with learning disabilities being inappropriately sent away to long stay institutions, where they are at risk of abuse and neglect.

Mark Goldring, chief executive of Mencap has taken part in a follow up Panorama, *The Hospital That Stopped Caring*, which airs tonight, Monday 29th October, on BBC One at 8.30pm. For advice and guidance after the programme call Mencap on **0808 808 1111**.

Mr Goldring says that the system is warehousing difficult patients, rather than focusing on treating them: “What allowed Winterbourne and places like it to flourish was that those places were effectively being used as a dumping ground by public bodies who hadn’t planned ahead... When you’re making a large profit you have no incentive to try and help with the discharge of somebody.”

The Department of Health has issued a number of statements committing to reducing the number of people being sent away for long periods for “assessment and treatment”. They agree that people should move out of services quickly and that local services should be commissioned.

However the charities are disappointed that at present there is no indication of how the Government is going to enforce these much needed changes, the timetable for closure or the reallocation of funds.

The families and charities have asked for an urgent meeting with Care Services minister Norman Lamb, to press the Government to use its report in November to announce how it will enforce a phased closure programme of institutions like Winterbourne View, and to clarify precisely how it will ensure that local, expert, services are provided and funded.

Vivien Cooper, founder of The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, says:

‘We are talking about people's daughters, sons, brothers and sisters, who have the same human rights as you or I. Too often individuals are being sent away from their families because the right support isn't in place locally. This must change. They should be able to stay close to the people who love them.’

The programme has learned that 19 of the 51 patients who spent time at Winterbourne View have had further alerts over their safety since leaving. Whilst not all alerts will mean someone has been harmed, the programme alleges that at least one patient has been assaulted and in a second case there is a criminal investigation.

One year after the original Panorama was broadcast, revealing the shocking abuse suffered by people with learning disabilities at Winterbourne View, Mencap and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation published “[Out of Sight](#)”, a report which showed clearly that people with learning disabilities are being systematically failed by local authorities and the NHS.

Ends

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW PLEASE
CONTACT THE MENCAP PRESS OFFICE ON 020 7696 5414

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Notes to editors

About Mencap

There are 1.5 million people with a learning disability in the UK. Mencap works to support people with a learning disability and their families and carers by fighting to change laws and improve services and access to education, employment and leisure facilities. Mencap supports thousands of people with a learning disability to live their lives the way they want. We are also one of the largest providers of services, information and advice for people with a learning disability across England, Northern Ireland and Wales. People with a learning disability and their carers can find out more about our services by calling Mencap Direct on 0300 333 111 or by visiting www.mencap.org.uk

What is a learning disability?

A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life.

People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complex information and interact with other people.

The level of support someone needs depends on individual factors, including the severity of their learning disability.

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Behaviour can be described as challenging when it is of such an intensity, frequency or duration as to threaten the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the individual or others and it is likely to lead to responses that are restrictive, aversive or result in exclusion.

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation provides information, support and training around challenging behaviour associated with severe learning disabilities, and leads the 'Challenging Behaviour National Strategy Group' which seeks to influence policy and practice nationally on behalf of individuals who challenge and their families. 'Severe learning disability' is a developmental disability meaning the individual has a significantly reduced ability to learn new skills. Individuals with severe learning disabilities typically have very limited communication skills, often non verbal, and need help with daily living skills such as eating and dressing. Challenging behaviour shown by individuals with severe learning disabilities may include aggression, self injury, disruptive and destructive behaviours, stereotyped behaviour, and is most often due to their lack of ability to communicate their needs.

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation was founded in 1997 by Vivien Cooper, parent of a son with severe learning disabilities and behaviour described as challenging. Today the Challenging Behaviour Foundation is in regular contact with over 4500 families and professionals across the UK.

There are an estimated 30,000 individuals in England with severe learning disabilities and behaviour described as challenging.

For more information visit www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk or contact:

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation info@theCBF.org.uk Telephone: 01634 838739

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