



Department
of Health &
Social Care

The treatment of autistic people and people with a learning disability

The Government's reply to The Health and Social Care Committee



**easy
read**

Contents

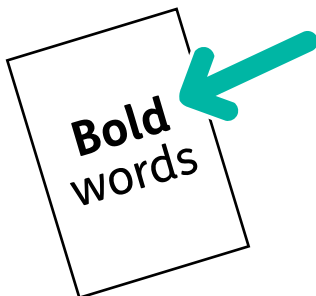
Page

Introduction	3
--------------	---

Summary of Government reply	4
-----------------------------	---

Our reply to the Committee's suggestions	6
--	---

For more information	27
----------------------	----



In this Easy Read document, hard words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after they have been used.



Some words are blue and underlined. These are links which will go to another website which has more information.

Introduction



The Health and Social Care Committee is a group of members of parliament who check on the work of the Department of Health and Social Care.



They wrote a report about the treatment of autistic people and people with a learning disability.



They suggested things that the Government should do.



This is the reply from the Government to those suggestions.



In this document, when we talk about 'people', we always mean people with a learning disability and autistic people.

Summary of Government reply



The Government welcomes the report from the Health and Social Care Committee.



We agree that people with a learning disability and autistic people should be able to live their life the way they would like in the community.

We are working on:



- Changing the law about mental health so that people get more control over their care and are treated with more dignity and respect.



- Making sure that people with a learning disability and autistic people who get into trouble with the law can be supported in hospital instead of prison.



- Checking that money is being spent in the right way on services for people with a learning disability and autistic people.



- Helping more people with a learning disability and autistic people to live safely in their community.



- Helping people with a learning disability and autistic people to leave mental health hospitals when they are ready.

Our reply to the Committee's suggestions

Suggestion 1

The Committee suggested that we:



- Share how much it would cost to move people from long-stay mental health hospitals back into their community.



- Give this money to local councils and health services so people can move back into their community.

Our reply



We agree with some of this suggestion.



It is hard to say how much money it would cost to move everyone out of mental health hospitals and back into their community because the money comes from many different places.



Between April 2022 and March 2023 the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England will spend over £90 million in services for people with a learning disability and autistic people.



This includes £21 million between April 2022 and March 2023 given to local councils in England so they can move people with a learning disability and autistic people out of mental health hospitals and back into their community.



It is hard to say how much it costs to support someone to live in the community. Different people need different amounts of support.



We are looking at how money is used for people's support.



We want to find more information about how this money is used in local areas.

Suggestion 2

The Committee suggested that we:



- Change how we give money to health services so they can support people in the community instead of long-stay mental health hospitals.

Our reply

We agree with this suggestion.



We are working to make sure people get the right support to live independently in their community.



We want to make changes to the law to improve mental health support for people with a learning disability and autistic people.



We want to make local councils and health services responsible for making sure there is enough support for people with a learning disability and autistic people in their local areas.



We want to make sure local councils and health services have a list of people who may need extra support, so they get this support, and don't have to go into a long-stay hospital.



A group of people in Parliament will speak to people who know about learning disability and autism and tell the government what they think of the changes to the law.



We are also working on:

- Making sure there are plenty of high quality support options in local areas.
- Helping people with a learning disability and autistic people to get better housing in local areas.



Suggestion 3

The Committee suggested that we:



- Stop moving people with a learning disability and autistic people into mental health hospitals, except where this is better than going to prison.

Our reply



We do not want to stop people going to mental health hospital if they need to because of a mental illness, so we do not agree with this suggestion.



There are times when people with a learning disability or autistic people would be safer and get the right care for a mental illness in a mental health hospital.



If people do have to go to a mental health hospital, we want this to be for as short a time as possible.



We want the new law to say that people with a learning disability and autistic people should only go into a mental health hospital if they have a mental health illness.



We are, however, spending more money on support for people so they don't have to go into hospital.

Suggestion 4

The Committee suggested that we:



- Work with the NHS to regularly check on people with a learning disability and autistic people in a mental health hospital to see whether they need to stay there.



- Make sure these checks are made by an independent health worker like a doctor or nurse.



- Make a law that says people should not have to live in a mental health hospital just because there are no places for them in the community.



- Make sure the law does not say that autism is a mental health illness.

Our reply



We agree with some of this suggestion.



We agree that people should only go into a mental health hospital for the shortest possible time.



We agree that people in mental health hospitals should be regularly checked to decide whether they need to stay there.



We also want to plan what should happen when a person leaves hospital. The plan should be made when they first go into hospital.



People with a learning disability and autistic people already have a regular review of their care and education. This happens every 3 months for children and every 6 months for adults.



We agree that people should not have to live in a mental health hospital just because there are no places for them in the community.



We agree that the law should not say that autism or learning disabilities are mental health illnesses.

Suggestion 5

The Committee suggested that:



- People with a learning disability and autistic people should not have to go to mental health hospitals that the **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** say are **Inadequate**.

The **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** checks the quality of health and social care services.

Inadequate means that the hospital is not being run properly and is not giving the service that it should.



- Health and care services should not buy services from places that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) say are Inadequate.



Our reply

We agree with some of this suggestion.



We want people with a learning disability and autistic people to have the best treatment.



The NHS will take action to avoid people going into a hospital that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have said is Inadequate.



Very rarely, there may be times when a person still goes into a hospital that the Care Quality Commission have said is Inadequate.



The NHS will make sure that the person and their family and or carers are involved and agree with decisions about this.



The NHS will check what is happening with people going into hospitals that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have said are Inadequate.

Suggestion 6

The Committee suggested that:

- We write a report every 6 months which says how many times **force** has been used against a person in a mental health hospital.

Force is when a patient is stopped from moving by holding them down or giving them medicine.



- Managers of hospitals that have used force against a person must meet with families and NHS staff within 1 month to explain what happened.



Our reply

We agree with some of this suggestion.



We already give out information every month about how force has been used on people with a learning disability and autistic people.



We are working to reduce the amount of force that is used in mental health hospitals.



We have made rules which say that services must tell us when they use force.



If a service uses force against someone, the person and their family should be involved in understanding why.



We are working to improve the care and support of people in mental health hospitals. For example, people who get care away from other people will get support to move to other parts of the hospital. Or they will get support to leave hospital.

Suggestion 7



Some people with a learning disability and autistic people have had to go to an Assessment and Treatment Unit.



People are only supposed to be at these units for a short time as staff work out what care and support they need.



But some people have been stuck in these units for a long time.



The Committee suggested that we:

- Close all these units within 2 years.
- Have services that are right for each person which are:
 - Easy for people to leave.
 - Designed to be good for people with a learning disability and autistic people.





- Near to the people's homes.



- Only for a short period of time.

Our reply



We agree with some of this suggestion.



It is important that we have places that people can go for mental health treatment if they need it.



Where people have to go to a mental health hospital we must check that the quality of care and support is good.

Suggestion 8



The Committee suggested that we make sure that staff in mental health hospitals who care for people with a learning disability and autistic people have proper training by April 2023.



They should have training so they know about:

- Working with people with a learning disability and autistic people.



- Listening to people and their families.



- Reducing the amount of force that is used.



Our reply

We agree with some of this suggestion.



We agree that staff should have the right training.



We are starting a new training programme for health and care staff so they understand more about working with people with a learning disability and autistic people.



We are arranging better training for staff working in mental health hospitals.



This will take time. Not all staff will have done the training by April 2023.



There will be a person in each local area with information about how to support people with a learning disability, autistic people and people with Down's syndrome.

Suggestion 9

The Committee suggested that we:



- Should look at how long it takes before you can get a doctor to see if you have autism or not.



- Should tell the Committee how long it is taking and how we are going to make it happen much quicker.

Our reply

We agree. We are already working on this.





The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) says that people shouldn't have to wait more than 13 weeks between their doctor saying they should have a check for autism and the check starting.



We are spending money to improve autism checks.

Suggestion 10

The Committee suggested that:



- We should look into having **Intellectual Disability Physicians** in the NHS.

Intellectual Disability Physicians are experts in working with people with a learning disability and autistic people.



- Intellectual Disability Physicians should work to reduce the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people in mental health hospitals.

Our reply



We agree. Government has looked into this.



But we are worried this could have some bad effects within health care services.



We would rather all doctors are able to work with people with a learning disability and autistic people.



We have been working to create training for health care staff.



The training will teach them about working with people with a learning disability and autistic people.

Suggestion 11

The Committee suggested that we:



- Must look into the deaths of every person with a learning disability or autistic person in mental health hospitals or getting care in their community.

Our reply



This is a very important issue, but we do not agree with saying that we must do this.



We already look into the reasons why people with a learning disability and autistic people have died in mental health hospitals.



The right people are involved in looking at these reasons in each local area.

For more information



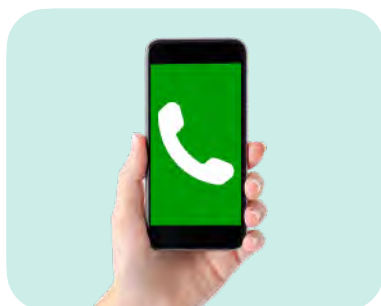
You can look at our website here:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care



If you need more information please contact us by:

- Post:
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU



- Phone: 0300 790 4007

This Easy Read information has been produced by easy-read-online.co.uk