



all about people

## News from BILD

25 June 2012

### **Half of services are failing people with learning disabilities – is the Department of Health’s response up to the job?**

BILD welcomes the reports from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Department of Health - anything that highlights issues important to people with learning disabilities and comes up with proposals to tackle poor services is valuable. But, while the CQC’s new evidence is shocking, the response from the Department of Health may be a missed opportunity to be ambitious for people with learning disabilities and make sure this failed model of care is changed forever.

The CQC reviewed 150 learning disability services and found almost half were not meeting government standards. This was not a surprise to most of us, just proof that things are actually worse than we thought. Of the 145 services inspected, only 35, a quarter, met government standards and 110 services will have to be re-visited.

More than the numbers, this report proves yet again that many services completely fail people with learning disabilities and their families and the use of inappropriate physical restraint places people at real risk of harm. The failure to meet the basic human rights of people with learning disabilities would not be tolerated were this happening to any other minority group in society.

The Department of Health’s interim report outlines 14 actions they say will improve the quality and safety of services for people with learning disabilities or autism who have behaviour which challenges. But they fall short of directing commissioners and providers of services to stop buying and providing this failed model of care and directly requiring them to implement the good practice set out by Jim Mansell. This huge gap between policy and practice has gone on for too long. It has to stop now.

It is clear that the present system doesn’t work. We need to stop sending people away to large institutional services. People need instead to be living closer to home and their families, in smaller settings that follow the individualised support approaches set out in the Mansell reports. We know that the right policies already exist, but making them work in

practice is about strong leadership and practical support to turn policy into action at a local level. This is where the system fails repeatedly.

“If the Department of Health can’t recognise that these are systemic failures then they can’t move in the right direction and at the right speed to fix them and, sadly, we will likely be here again at some point in the future,” said Ann Chivers, BILD’s Chief Executive. “The Department of Health’s 14 actions lack the strong leadership, vision and drive to lead and set the pace. There are few examples that talk about fixing a system that is clearly broken, and fixing it fast. We would have expected a statement about ending this model of care and a clear new focus on performance and evidence based impact, showing how the 14 actions will make a difference to the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families.”

We hope that the Department’s full report in the autumn will provide a much clearer statement that will finally bridge the huge gap between policy and practice and, most of all, be ambitious for people with learning disabilities and their families, and for all those who support them.

ENDS

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Notes for Editor

BILD, The British Institute of Learning Disabilities, is based in Kidderminster where it was founded in 1971. BILD’s vision is a society where people with learning disabilities are equal citizens and have access to the support and services they need. We work to make this happen in partnership with people with a learning disability and family carers. They are the real ‘experts’, knowing what support is needed, and what needs to change to improve the quality of their lives.

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