

From Hospitals to Homes

How people with a learning disability can live in homes, not hospitals



How to use this document



This is an Easy Read version of: From Hospitals to Homes written by Joe Powell, Dawn Cavanagh, David Abbott and Janis Griffiths.



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Contents

About this report	4
Human rights	7
Why people are kept in hospitals	15
Collecting information.....	20
What needs to change.....	22
1. Stop keeping people in hospital if they do not need to be there ...	23
2. Improve services to stop hospital stays	26
3. Check how things are done to make care better.....	29
4. Report and share concerns early.....	31
5. Make the law stronger to protect people and families	32
6. Have a Learning Disability Commissioner	34
7. Check the work of social workers and professionals	35
8. Make better ways for people to complain.....	36

About this report



We are the **Stolen Lives Homes Not Hospitals Task and Finish Group**.



This report is about people with learning disabilities and or autistic people, who are wrongly kept in hospital.



When we say people in this report, we are talking about:

- **People with a learning disability**
- **And or autistic people**



Many people are kept in hospitals far from their families and communities.



They stay in hospital a long time and live with strict and unfair rules.



These rules can break human rights.



This is a problem across the UK, but the Welsh Government must fix it in Wales.



We looked at what can help people live in homes, not hospitals.



This report looks at why people are kept in hospitals when they do not need to be.



It explains problems with care, housing, and support.



It gives 8 main ideas for changes to help people live well in their communities.

Human rights



Most people do not need hospitals, even if they have mental health needs.



Hospitals can be noisy, crowded and have strict rules. They can be hard for people sensitive to sound, light and touch.



Being in hospital can make people upset. Sometimes this upset is wrongly used as a reason to keep them there longer.



Some people have been kept in hospital for more than 30 years.



Keeping people in hospital when they do not need to be is a human rights problem.

We have laws that protect our human rights. They say we all have the right to:



- Not be kept in hospital without good reason.



- Not be treated badly or unfairly.



- A home and family life.



- Be free and safe and not locked up for no good reason.



- Live in the community with support.



- Children should only be detained as a last option, for the shortest time.



- Disabled children should live full lives in the community.

People far from home



Some people are sent to hospitals far from their families and friends. Many people are sent to hospitals in England.



This can make them feel lonely and unsafe.



Being far from home makes it harder for families and staff to help.



Some hospitals have known problems and are not safe.

Impact on families



Many families do not know their rights and often feel afraid and alone.



Sometimes families are stopped from talking to the media or politicians. This can break their right to speak out.



Some families stay quiet because they are afraid of what might happen if they talk.



Some people in hospitals have no family to speak for them. This makes it even harder for their voices to be heard.

Wrong type of hospital



Health boards have closed some specialist learning disability hospitals to save money.



Many people are sent to mental health hospitals instead.

In these hospitals:



- Behaviour is often seen as a mental health problem.



- Distress is sometimes treated as a crime.



- Staff do not understand or support people's needs.



This keeps people in the wrong places. Instead of supporting them in their community.

Life in the community



Living in the community is much better for people than staying in hospital.



People can be themselves, make choices, and take part in daily life.



They can have friends and contact family.



Keeping people in hospital when they should not be there harms them and their families.

Why people are kept in hospitals



There is a gap between what Welsh laws say and what happens.



Cuts to services have made things worse.



It is harder for families to get help.



More people are sent to hospital because there is no support.



There are many reports and plans, but there has been little real change.

Problems with social care



Bad social care is a big reason people are sent to hospital.



People are often put in hospitals when other care has not worked well. Or when families complain about bad care.



Some people are put in hospital when families ask for a break or support with caring.



Health and social care services should work together and make care easier to get. But families say this is not happening.

Policies and laws



Many policies meant to keep people safe are not working.

Families say this happens because:



- Policies do not have to be followed by law, so people ignore them.



- Policies can mean different things to different people.



- Nothing happens when people ignore policies.

The Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan 2022 to 2026 says it will:



- Improve support in the community so fewer people go to hospital.



- Provide safe specialised care close to home.



- Help people return home as soon as they can.



Families say the plan is not clear about how, when, or who will make these changes.



Learning Disability Wales wants a detailed plan with clear goals to improve services.

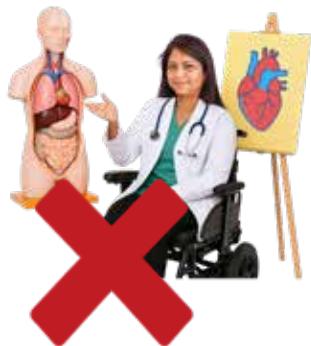
Housing and community support



There is not enough housing or support for people in the community.



This goes against the **All Wales Strategy**, which says:



- Learning disability is not a medical condition.



- People with learning disabilities should live normal lives in the community.

Collecting information



Wales needs better information about people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

This will help the Welsh Government:



- Count how many people are in the wrong places.



- Plan for moving people into homes and community support.



- Show what services are missing and what needs to change.



There are still big gaps in information about people with learning disabilities in Wales.



Scotland has a **Learning Disabilities Observatory**. This is a group that collects this information there.



The Welsh Government has not set up an Observatory. Or checked how useful it could be.

What needs to change



People should live in the community and be safe and happy.



The Welsh Government and services need to make changes now to make this happen.



We have 8 main ideas for change.

1. Stop keeping people in hospital if they do not need to be there



- The Welsh Government must say that support for people should be in the community.



- The Welsh Government must make it clear that no one should stay in a mental health hospital if they do not have a mental health condition.



- The Welsh Government must say that being upset or acting out must not be a reason to send someone to hospital.



- The Welsh Government must stop children with learning disabilities and autistic children being sent to hospitals.



- The Welsh Government must change the law so that only people with mental health conditions can be kept in hospital.



- Welsh Government should plan early to lower the risk of young people being put in hospital. Problems often happen when children move to adult services.



- Learning disability hospitals should close. People should get support in the community, with safe short-term places to stay instead of hospitals.



- The Welsh Government should reduce strict hospital rules and help people leave hospital safely. They can learn from work done in England.



- Health boards and councils must provide good local services.



- The Welsh Government should say sorry for keeping people far from home for too long.

2. Improve services to stop hospital stays



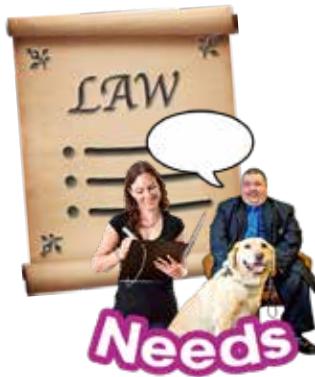
- The Welsh Government must make community and hospital services better. Services must focus on early help and giving care in the community.



- Staff should be trained and supported. Services should make it easier for people to live safely and take part in their community.



- Planning and funding must be checked often. Clear rules about quality and safety must be followed.



- The law should say that people who plan or provide services must meet people's needs. People with high support needs must get the right services.



- Private companies must not put making money above good care and staffing.



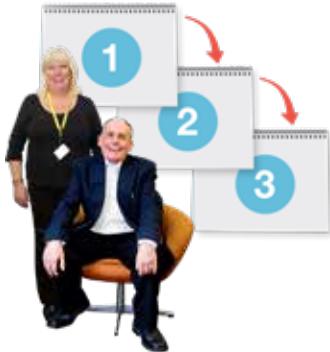
- The Welsh Government must recognise the housing needs of people in hospitals. Social housing funding should help people move back into their local community.



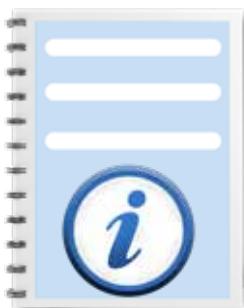
- Health boards and councils must work together to make housing and support better. Money for health and social care should be joined. Regional Partnership Boards could help manage this money and make changes.



- Community services and short breaks must get more money now. They have had money cuts for years.



- There should be one clear way of caring for people in Wales. It should include early help, and support for people having a very hard time.



- The Welsh Government should share clear information every year about how much is spent on putting people in hospital care.

3. Check how things are done to make care better.



- A group should check every person's case in hospital. This should be led by someone from outside of the government.



- The group should include people who have lived in hospital and families. It should find what stops people leaving hospital and help them return to their local community.



- The group should look at how the Welsh Government can support people who were wrongly kept in hospital and their families.



- The group should look at how information is collected and shared.



- There should also be a check of the way inspections are done in Wales. This should check if inspections find and fix bad care.



- The way care is planned and managed must also be checked.

4. Report and share concerns early.



- The group from idea 3 should make an easy way to report worries about the care of people in hospital.



- A separate organisation should lead this work. It should give reports to Ministers and other organisations. Everyone should be able to read the reports.



- Every time someone is put in hospital, it should be reported to Care Inspectorate Wales and Health Inspectorate Wales. The reports should be shared with families and professionals.

5. Make the law stronger to protect people and families



- The Welsh Government should make stronger laws to stop people being wrongly kept in hospitals. Organisations that do not protect people's rights must be stopped.



- The Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework must become law, so everyone follows it. This is a guide to lower things like holding people down, and locking them in a room.



- The way people are placed in a hospital must be checked. A separate group could lead this work.



- Families should get free legal help when rules are not followed.



- Families must never be punished for complaining. Legal threats and misuse of the law must stop. A review should happen if a family's rights are harmed after complaining.



- Families need more support to defend their loved one's human rights. Legal action can take a long time, and lawyers are hard to find and cost a lot.



- Legal action that stops people from speaking out must only be used with strong checks. Councils should need approval from a Minister before applying for them.



- The Welsh Government should review long legal cases to see if families' human rights were harmed.



- There should be a special support service giving legal advice to families. A separate group should check that it works well.

6. Have a Learning Disability Commissioner



- The Welsh Government should have a Learning Disability Commissioner. This person would check the move from hospitals to the community for 5 years. They would lead the group from Idea 3 and set target times for action.



- The commissioner should listen to families and people with concerns and make sure lessons are learned.



- The commissioner must make sure the government includes learning disability needs in plans and policies.



- The Welsh Government should give the Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group a bigger role in checking progress on changes.

7. Check the work of social workers and professionals



- All social workers and care teams should be checked. The way Care Inspectorate Wales inspects services should be checked.



- Social work students must spend time working with people. The number of social workers who get this training should be recorded.



- Social workers should get more training about supporting people and their families.



- Training for workers who help decide if someone should go to a mental health hospital must be checked and made better. They should be stopped if they do not follow legal rules. They should explain rights to families and answer their questions.

8. Make better ways for people to complain



- Safeguarding teams must act quickly. They should understand that people with learning disabilities and autistic people are at higher risk of harm.



- Safeguarding rules should be stronger for people in places where they have little control. Families must feel safe to complain.



- The Welsh Government must check the complaints system and use good ideas from England. The system should be fair, simple, and based on people's experiences.



- Families taking part in campaigns like Stolen Lives must not be treated unfairly by health boards or councils.