

Better care for people with a learning disability and people with autism

- Measures include offering better support from birth, better preventative support in the community, and work to improve quality of care
- Government has set out how it will reduce the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist inpatient care by 50% by March 2024 compared with March 2015

People with a learning disability and autistic people will receive better and more focused community care as part of plans to reduce the number in specialist inpatient care.

The Building the Right Support Action Plan published today brings together in one place commitments from across government and public services to ensure there is suitable community support available for people with a learning disability and autistic people. This supports government plans to reduce reliance on mental health inpatient care.

Measures brought together in the action plan include:

- Speeding up discharges for people with a learning disability and autistic people supported by additional targeted funding of more than £90 million in 2022/2023 including:
 - A £40 million investment from the NHS Long Term Plan to continue to improve the capacity and capability of crisis support for autistic people and people with a learning disability in every area of the country and £30 million of funding to continue putting key workers in place for children and young people with the most complex needs
 - A £21 million Community Discharge Grant to local authorities which will help people with a learning disability and autistic people to be discharged
- Limiting the scope under which people with a learning disability and autistic people can be detained by reforming the Mental Health Act to improve how people are treated in law
- Building on specialist training for health and care staff to ensure they have the skills to better care for people with a learning disability and autistic people

The plan focuses on keeping people safe now and also delivering long term change for people with a learning disability and autistic people. It aims to ensure people are treated with dignity and respect, experience personalised care and treatment, and can live an ordinary, independent life in their own home as part of the community.

Minister for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan said:.

For too long autistic people and people with a learning disability have remained as inpatients in mental health units not necessarily because it was the best place but because of failings in the system and a lack of community facilities to support them.

I am committed to driving further, faster progress to ensure people with a learning disability and autistic people, of all ages, receive high quality health and social care support in their communities when they need it.

The plan prioritises safety and quality of life and includes the proposal in the draft Mental Health Bill that neither a learning disability or autism can be considered mental health disorders requiring compulsory treatment.

Where people would benefit from inpatient care, the plan seeks to improve the quality of care in mental health hospitals. This includes taking steps to ensure care review recommendations are followed, reducing restrictive practices, and targeted support for people in long term segregation to move into the community or a less restrictive setting as appropriate.

This work will be supported by increasing the availability and choice of specialist and supported housing options.

The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced a new requirement for registered providers to ensure their staff receive specific training on learning disability and autism, which is appropriate to their role.

There are also proposed new duties on commissioners to ensure there are the right community based services in their area and there is better monitoring of risk of crisis at a local level.

Early intervention is key to ensuring people get the right support throughout their lives, which includes improved experiences of education and early diagnosis. The government will build on the £10.5 million Covid-19 Mental Health Recovery Fund and £2.5 million NHS Long Term Plan investment, with a further £2.5 million to support the delivery of the Long Term Plan commitment to improve autism diagnosis pathways for children and young people.