

News story: New measures to improve care for people with autism and learning disabilities

The care of every patient in segregation or long-term seclusion will be reviewed as part of plans to improve the model of care for autistic people and people with learning disabilities.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock, has announced that the government will fund specialist, independent advocates who will:

- work with families
- join up services
- work to move people to the least restrictive care and then out into the community

There are currently 2,245 patients in mental health inpatient settings in England. The government has committed to halving this number by 2024. Since 2015, the number has reduced by 22%.

The plans have been announced ahead of the publication of the Care Quality Commission's interim report into the use of restraint, segregation and prolonged seclusion in health and care settings. The report was commissioned by the Health and Social Care Secretary last November.

The Health and Social Care Secretary will accept all of the CQC report's recommendations and has announced a wider package of measures to improve care for autistic people and those with learning disabilities, including:

- funding for specialist advocates to review the care of every patient in long-term seclusion or segregation
- a new working group for learning disabilities and autism, bringing together experts, clinicians, parents and carers to develop a new model of care
- a new awareness campaign, to encourage staff, families and friends to come forward if they have concerns about care

The commitments build on proposals announced earlier this year, which will see all health and care staff undertake mandatory training on learning disability and autism to ensure that the care offered is high quality, sensitive and compassionate.

Learning disabilities and autism are one of the 4 clinical priorities in the [NHS Long Term Plan](#). The plan sets out ways to improve community support and halve the number of people in mental health hospitals with a learning disability or on the autism spectrum by 2024.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock, said:

I have been deeply moved and appalled by the distressing stories of some autistic people and people with learning disabilities spending years detained in mental health units. These vulnerable people are too often left alone, away from their families, friends and communities.

At its best, the health and care system provides excellent support to people, backed by a dedicated workforce. But a small proportion of some of the most vulnerable in society are being failed by a broken system that doesn't work for them.

I commissioned the Care Quality Commission to review the use of segregation in health and care settings to tackle this issue head on. Today I have accepted their recommendations in full. I hope this is a turning point so everyone receives the care they need.

I will not let these people down – they deserve better.