



Position Statement

A statement on Whorlton Hall

Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities

June 2019



Inclusion is key to preventing further abuse

Like so many across the learning disability community and beyond, SCLD was appalled by the horrendous footage recently featured on Panorama's exposé of the specialist hospital, Whorlton Hall. People with learning disabilities deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, so it was shocking to see behaviour that fell so drastically short of these standards that it warranted criminal charges.

It was especially disheartening as these reports confirmed that, eight years on, the legacy of Winterbourne View has not been one of truly meaningful change in the care provided to the most vulnerable people with learning disabilities.

Whilst Whorlton Hall, like Winterbourne View, is a hospital in England, it would be wrong for us not to consider these issues from a Scottish perspective.

In 2017, the [Care Inspectorate](#) produced its first ever thematic [report](#) on inspections of services for adults with learning disabilities in Scotland. The report showed that the significant majority of care and support for people with learning disabilities was performing well, and in most cases continuing to improve.

However, there were areas of improvement still required, and we know that many people with learning disabilities do not feel they are receiving truly personalised care that gives them choice and control over their lives. We will only uphold and improve standards by remaining focused on improving the quality of care and support, with, and not simply for people with learning disabilities.

The coverage from Whorlton Hall underlines the importance of addressing the findings of the Scottish Government's '*Coming Home*' report. The report states that seven hundred people with complex needs are being cared for away from their own area. Four-hundred and fifty-three of these individuals did not choose to receive

care away from their own area; seventy-nine of them have had to move out of Scotland altogether. These individuals have a range of complex needs. However, as the report states, the complexity of a person's needs does not change the fact that they have human rights. Their human rights can only be meaningfully realised with care and support provided in their *own* communities.

The abuse shown on BBC Panorama highlights the most serious type of system failure that leads to the abuse of people with learning disabilities. Yet it is not the only example; people with learning disabilities are harmed because of failures in processes and support, not only in health and social care, but in many aspects of their lives, from how they learn to how they travel.

If appropriate, joined-up and cross-policy working was in place, then situations are far less likely to escalate into crisis; this is why a whole-system approach is at the heart of the Scottish Government's *The keys to life* Implementation Framework. We need concerted, multi-agency approaches across local and national government, and both the third and private sectors to ensure that people with learning disabilities are not forgotten about or left to live with unacceptable levels of risk.

The Scottish Government is committed to implementing the recommendations of the '*Coming Home*' report. This includes work to strengthen community services, the further development of commissioning and service planning and the development of positive behavioural support approaches. These are critically important in providing early interventions that stop situations escalating into the crisis scenarios that can lead to incidents like those at Whorlton Hall.

SCLD is committed to working with the Scottish Government, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Local Authorities, care and support providers and housing providers to develop innovative solutions. These must enable the people identified as a priority within '*Coming Home*' to return to live independently, close to their families, with meaningful *choice* and *control* over their lives.

We believe that these failures are symptomatic of the stigma that people with learning disabilities face every day. The majority of people with learning disabilities in Scotland do not live their lives in institutional settings, but neither do they live their lives at the heart of their communities as equal and active citizens. SCLD emphasised this during Learning Disability Week 2019, which raised awareness of the importance of people with learning disabilities being 'active', 'connected' and 'included' within their communities. We also highlighted the barriers that many people with learning disabilities face to full inclusion within their communities.

If the aftermath of the Whorlton Hall scandal is to act as a catalyst for change in a way that Winterbourne View apparently did not, it is essential to remove these barriers for people with learning disabilities; the more isolated and invisible people are, the more vulnerable they are to abuse.

SCLD is committed to working with people with learning disabilities and all of our partners and stakeholders, to ensure that people with learning disabilities have their human rights protected, and are safe and able to live their best lives.

The Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities

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To find out more about SCLD and the work we do, please visit: www.sclld.org.uk

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