

# Six Lives Audit of Health and Social Care Services in Northamptonshire

A report by Jeanette Longhurst to the Learning Disability Partnership Board – September 2009

## What the report is about



Over the past few years some people have had some bad times when they have needed help from health or social care services.

Some of these problems were investigated and a report called the Six Lives Report was published.



The Learning Disability Partnership Board asked Jeanette to see if the same problems were happening in Northamptonshire. They also wanted to know if people with learning disabilities are getting fair treatment.

## What Jeanette did



Jeanette read a lot of papers from the 4 Health Trusts and the County Council

She talked to a lot of people who work in health and social care about what they do to make sure people who have a learning disability get a good service



Jeanette also talked to a lot of people about their own experiences of being in hospital, going to the GP or having respite care.

## What Jeanette found out



The health trusts and the County Council all know they have a lot to do to improve the services for people in Northamptonshire

Each of the health trusts have an action plan to help them.



The Primary Care Trust has talked with people about health services. This was called the Big Health Check and the Primary Care Trust brought a list of all the things they are going to do to the Learning Disability Partnership Board in August 2009.

There are lots of things that need to change and one of the very big areas is about changing attitudes towards people with a learning disability.



## What people told Jeanette

Some experiences were good, but some were very bad:

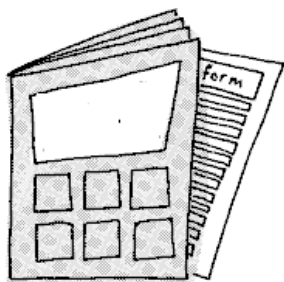
### These are some of the bad things:

Health staff talk to the carer and not to the patient.



One person said

“Nobody talks to Peter. Almost all professionals will talk to the carer”



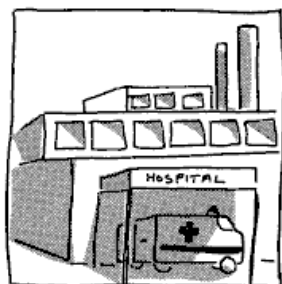
Some people had information to help the hospital staff understand their special needs – like the Helping Me in Hospital book

Even when people had this sort of information many hospital staff did not read it and so people were not treated as well as they could be.



There are no extra checks made in hospitals when people with a learning disability go in and if there were the nursing staff may be able to support people in a better way.

Sometimes when people were ill doctors and nurses assumed that the pain or discomfort they were showing was just part of their disability



The patient's usual carers were expected to do all the basic care while someone was in hospital and this sometimes meant that carers had to stay at the hospital all day and all night. When carers did stay all night, they often had to sleep in a chair by the side of the bed.

Family carers were also not listened to by staff in hospitals and this sometimes meant that people did not get good treatment at the right time.



Staff in hospitals and other health services did not seem to have enough training about learning disability and this worried family carers.

The basic care and help that people had when in hospital and sometimes in residential care was not as good as it should be.

Basic care is about help and support at mealtimes or when using the bathroom or when taking tablets or medicines.



The fact that people did not get good care, was causing worry to people with a learning disability and their families and to staff who know them.

Sometimes the patients left hospital without proper arrangements being made for them when they went home.



If people had asked for a copy of the letter from the hospital to their GP, they often could not understand it as it had lots of big words.

People were also not able to use the same services as other people when they left hospital – these services are sometimes called intermediate care



People didn't like to complain because they thought their care might get even worse

They also thought the nurses were very busy

The personal care people got in hospital when they became an adult wasn't as good as when they were children



All of these problems were not just happening to people with a learning disability but to any patient who was vulnerable or had special needs



## These are some of the good things that Jeanette found out about:

The strategic health facilitators were doing a good job in helping the health services improve but there was a lot to do and not many people to do it

The GP who had taken an interest in care for people with a learning disability was helping to improve the understanding of GPs



Lots of GPs were now starting to do annual health checks for people

The community nurses for learning disability were very good but very busy



Health action plans for people were a good idea and were working for some people but not everybody has one.

Dentists, podiatrists and dieticians were good when you could get to them but getting appointments could be better

Family carers liked that they could use respite services but thought they wanted more and sometimes thought that staff needed to be trained in more things



People said that health services in the community like GP's and nurses were good

Social care services were thought to be good most of the time

Advocates were good but some were needed for people who can't ask for one or for people who can't say what they need support with.



### **Other things that could be better**

Better plans need to be made by the commissioners about what services will be available in future.

Commissioners are people who arrange and buy services for the County Council and the Primary Care Trust.

The plans need to think about what people with learning disabilities will need in the future and the plans need to tell people how things will change and when.

People were worried about those people who live on their own in the community with only a little support. What happens if they need extra support because they are ill and need to go into hospital?

The Mental Capacity Act is still not understood by everybody.

Complaints systems do not show whether the person who is making a complaint has a learning disability so it is hard to see if there are certain things that are not working for people with a learning disability.

It is also hard to see what things are getting better after people have complained.



## Some suggestions from Jeanette



Jeanette has written down some ideas of things that could be changed. The Learning Disability Partnership Board will talk about these things at the meeting in September and if you want to know what happened at this meeting please look at the minutes from the meeting which will be on the website



[www.northantsldpb.org.uk](http://www.northantsldpb.org.uk)

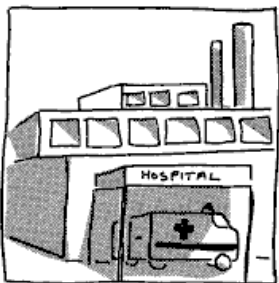
The ideas of things to change are:

Should the Learning Disability Partnership Board encourage everyone to have a helping me in hospital booklet?



Should the Learning Disability Partnership Board ask partners to make sure their staff use these booklets?

Should partners work out a way of providing support for people who need it when in hospital?



Ask the hospitals to make sure children's services work with the adult specialists for people who use hospital services a lot

Ask the County Council to make sure people who only have a little support can get more when they are ill

Ask the intermediate care service to make sure people with learning disabilities can use their service



Ask the health and social care partners to tell the Learning Disability Partnership Board what they have improved as a result of complaints and to encourage people to make comments about the health and social care services



Work with the commissioners to make sure plans are in place to meet future needs for people with learning disabilities

Ask the partners to report back on the progress of all of their action plans



Expect that in hospital or residential care a member of staff will be personally responsible for making sure the persons basic care needs are being met

### **Last words from Jeanette**

I hope you find the report useful



A special thanks to all those people who talked to Jeanette

If you want to know more about this, there is a longer report that Jeanette has written.