

**Open letter to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
12 June 2019**

The Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Via email

Dear Secretary of State

The aim of assessment and treatment units is to offer short-term support, not protracted periods of containment and isolation over months and sometimes years.

Yet eight years after the Winterbourne View scandal, when government promised to close down these units, our society still places people with a learning disability, autism or mental ill health in these long-stay inpatient units.

This is unacceptable.

Inpatient units pose a significant threat to people's safety and risk breaching their human rights. Countless reviews and broadcast exposes, such as BBC's Panorama on Winterbourne View and Whorlton Hall, have made this very clear. In spite of this, public service commissioners continue to place individuals in these settings, ostensibly for short-term assessment and treatment. The reality is that people are deprived of their liberty in what are effectively long-term institutions.

Meanwhile, there is no realistic government policy or strategy to prevent the creation of more of these inpatient units. These places are often funded with overseas investment, predominantly from overseas companies that have a vested interest in maintaining £78m of income made from such long-stay care. Conversely, the programme of building and adapting homes, investment to fund this, and to re-provide services in community settings is both patchy and inadequate.

We therefore call on you as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to direct Ian Trenholm, the chief executive of the regulator the Care Quality Commission, to give a 'requires improvement' rating to assessment and treatment units where people have been living for more than 12 months. The rating should be further downgraded to 'inadequate' if anyone has been living there for 24 months, and all new admissions must be halted until the rating has improved. We believe that this measure will begin to slow down new admissions to secure settings and also prompt the earlier discharge of people.

In addition, people cannot be discharged unless the necessary infrastructure, services and skilled workers are in place within communities. With this in mind, we also call on you as Secretary of State to cost and establish a community development fund to pump prime investment for homes and services.

To avoid further years of delay and the risk posed to people who need support, we firmly believe that government must act now.

People with a learning disability, autism or mental ill health must be able to move back home, to live the lives that they want in the communities where they belong.

Yours sincerely

Dr Rhidian Hughes, Chief Executive, Voluntary Organisations Disability Group

Mark Adams, Chief Executive, Community Integrated Care

Paul Allen, Chief Executive, Vibrance

Julie Bass, Group Managing Director, Turning Point

Dr Noelle Blackman, Chief Executive, Respond

Simon Blyghton, Managing Director, Waymarks

Vicky Browning, Chief Executive, Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations

Sarah Burslem, Chief Executive, MacIntyre

Katie Clarke, Co-founder, Bringing Us Together

Tim Cooper, Chief Executive, United Response

Holly Dagnall, Director, NCHA Homes and Wellbeing

Lesley Dixon, Chief Executive, PSS

Aisling Duffy, Chief Executive, Certitude

David Ellis, Chief Executive, National Star

Alex Fox, Chief Executive, Shared Lives Plus

Diane French, Chief Executive, Reside Housing

Ruth Gorman, Chief Executive, Imagine Act and Succeed

Neil Heslop, Chief Executive, Leonard Cheshire

Lisa Hopkins, Chief Executive, SeeAbility

John Hoskinson, Chief Executive, Milestones Trust

Steve James, Group Chief Executive, Avenues

Huw John, Chief Executive, Camphill Village Trust

Matt Jones, Chief Executive, Guideposts Trust

Luke Joy-Smith, Managing Director, Discovery

Stef Kay, Deputy Chief Executive, Bethphage

Karyn Kirkpatrick, Chief Executive, KeyRing

Dr Deborah Kitson, Chief Executive, Ann Craft Trust

Richard Kramer, Chief Executive, SENSE

Rachel Law, Chief Executive, PossAbilities

Julie Layton, Chief Executive, Advance

Mark Lee, Chief Executive, Together Trust

Sue Livett, Managing Director, Aldingbourne Trust

Ben McCay, Chair, My Life My Choice

Linda McGowan, Chief Executive, Centre 404

Sarah Maguire, Chief Executive, Choice Support

Susie Maguire, Deputy Chief Executive, St Anne's Community Services

Kamran Mallick, Chief Executive, Disability Rights UK

Paul Marshall, Chief Executive, National Development Team for Inclusion

Maria Mills, Chief Executive, Active Prospects

Martin Nicholas, Director, Partners in Support

Rachel Peacock, Chief Executive, Making Space

Sarah Pickard, Director, Brighton and Hove Speak Out

Kathy Roberts, Chief Executive, Association of Mental Health Providers

Dr David Sargent, Group Chief Executive, Real Life Options

Steve Scown, Group Chief Executive, Dimensions

Jonathan Senker, Chief Executive, VoiceAbility

Jordan Smith, Scott Watkin and Wendy Burt (on behalf of the representative body),
Learning Disability England

Paul Snell, Chief Executive, Walsingham Support

Leo Sowerby, Chief Executive, Affinity Trust

John Verge, Director, Golden Lane Housing

Ellen Vick, Chief Executive, New Prospects Association

Andrea Wiggins, Chief Executive, Lewisham Nexus Service

Richard Williams, Chief Executive, Options for Supported Living

Copy:

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Chair, Joint Committee on Human Rights

Ian Trenholm, Chief Executive, Care Quality Commission