

EQ News Notes 6 August 2012

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- **Who will defend our services? How local authority cuts are affecting campaigning organisations**
- **PIP** – the biggest shake-up of benefits for disabled people for 20 years.
- **Life within padded walls** – use of seclusion could be against the law
- **Don't accept low prices for care, providers told**



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- **The future of care** – what the White Paper and the Care and Support Bill mean for people with learning disabilities
- **A Pyrrhic victory for the council?** Belinda Schwehr examines the implications of the Cambridgeshire judgment on direct payments
- **Managing money** – what the Mental Capacity Act says

Raising awareness about online risks

Carlisle Mencap have produced a DVD to raise awareness of the online risks facing young people with learning disabilities, the News and Star reported on 31 May 2012. Sheila Gregory, chief executive, said over the last few years more and more young people with learning disabilities have started using mobile phones and social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter and many were unaware of the dangers.

One woman showed staff her Facebook page to reveal she had over 800 friends. “She didn’t know who they were, she just thought they wanted to be her friend. A lot of them were men posting sexual comments she didn’t understand,” Sheila Gregory said.

Copies of the DVD are available from Carlisle Mencap (01228 543790)

Report highlights poor care in Staffordshire

Primary care and social services managers in Staffordshire have been roundly criticised in a report revealing poor quality of care for people with severe learning disabilities.

Investigators found that people were being let down by health services with large numbers ‘trapped’ in inappropriate and outdated NHS services. One patient had been kept in a bed at the Harplands Hospital treatment and assessment unit for five years.

Social services said they had problems drafting in health specialists for crisis cases in the community and that patients’ behaviour was no better when they left hospital while NHS managers felt social care providers were too weak and unskilled to look after people with complex and challenging needs.

In addition, patients’ families were not consulted when services were being drawn up for their loved-ones.

The report was commissioned from NDTi by Staffordshire’s three primary care trusts and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire councils last November but the findings only came to light after a Freedom of Information request, as reported in The Sentinel, a Staffordshire paper, on 1 August. At the time of writing, the report had still not been made generally available.

NDTi director Rob Greig said: “This was a report for a client – as opposed to one of NDTi’s public reports. As such it is for them and not NDTi to decide whether to publish it. We understand it is their intention to make the report public – along with a statement about the action they are taking in response to our recommendations.”

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Joe sings for the Special Olympians

American Jazz singer Joe Francis has released a new single “Waiting on the World to Change”, with all proceeds and net sales benefiting Special Olympics Great Britain.

“Special Olympics touches people’s lives in a similar way to how a great song can touch people’s lives,” Joe says. “It moves them, excites them and can be inspirational. Special Olympics athletes inspire me.”

Joe has had his own struggles with learning disabilities and understands the immense discrimination and challenges that many people living with disabilities face daily. Several Special Olympic GB athletes appear in the music video for the song, including Katie Day, 27, of Birmingham, Sharon Olivier, 40, of Sutton Coldfield, and Ben Eaton, 35, of Birmingham. The single is now available for purchase on iTunes, Amazon, CD Baby and record retail stores. The video can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vk2xbrNMMzo>

The picture features Special Olympics Athletes with Joe Francis (seated).

L-R: William Cottrel, Jonathan Lehrter, Greg Friend and Sarah Prior.

Dismay at ATOS awarded contract to do PIPs in Scotland

VIA in Scotland have expressed dismay at the announcement that ATOS has been awarded the contract to do PIP assessments in Scotland. The Personal Independence Payment replaces Disability Living Allowance.

ATOS was one of the organisations featured in recent TV programmes (Panorama and Channel 4 Dispatches) which showed how some very disabled

people were being placed on the work related benefit scheme and expected to train for employment.

VIA in Scotland are urging people to share this information as widely as possible using www.facebook.com/scfafs or tweet using the #hashtag#welfarereform

See also Community Living, Volume 25, No. 1. Fit for work? Charlie Callanan explains how the new system will work.

Councils act to tackle rise in forced marriages

Fifty English councils are bringing in policies to tackle the rise in the number of people with learning disabilities being forced into marriage. Social workers and other staff will be issued with guidance to raise awareness and spot potential victims.

It is unlawful to give permission for a marriage on behalf of a person if they cannot consent themselves.

The Forced Marriage Unit said there were 56 referrals involving people with learning disabilities last year and six in the past month alone. In addition to the 50 local authorities, which include all 33 in London and 12 in the West Midlands, another five councils in West Yorkshire are expected to sign up soon.

The procedures have been drawn up with the Social Care Institute for Excellence, an independent charity involved in social care and social work.

Toby Williamson, from the Mental Health Foundation, said. "Although some decisions could be made for someone else in their 'best interest', the Mental Capacity Act 2005 contained 'excluded decisions', which covered marriage. The act makes it quite clear that if someone lacks capacity to consent to marriage, no-one else can make a decision on their behalf, because the nature of marriage is a very personal issue, and other laws govern marriage."

The government recently announced plans to criminalise forced marriage and a new law is expected by autumn 2013.