

# **Independent Inquiry into Access to Healthcare for People with Learning Disabilities**

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London W1A 2NS

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## **INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

### **CALL TO SUBMIT EVIDENCE**

An easy read version of this letter is attached.

The Secretary of State for Health announced the establishment of an Independent Inquiry into Access to Healthcare for People with Learning Disabilities on 31 May 2007. The Inquiry will focus on the action needed to ensure adults and children with learning disabilities receive appropriate treatment in general health care in England; this means acute medical (hospital) care and general primary care, not mental health services or specialist learning disability services.

The Inquiry is chaired by Sir Jonathan Michael MB, BS, FRCP, FRC, formerly the Chief Executive of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. The inquiry team consists of a panel of experts on health and social care services working with a panel of people with learning disabilities who have experience of using services

In addition to reviewing evidence relating to acute medical care, the panel aims to learn lessons from the six cases highlighted by the Mencap report 'Death by Indifference.' It will take careful account of any information that The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman shares as she undertakes an independent investigation of these cases.

The Inquiry Panel would welcome information from professionals as well as people with learning disabilities and/or their carers and families. It would particularly welcome views on how current practice could be improved, as well as examples of where services are working well. The Panel will use this information to formulate questions for witnesses who will be invited to give verbal evidence later in the year. All information provided to the Inquiry will be treated in strict confidence.

It would help the Inquiry Panel if written evidence is submitted using the enclosed proforma by the end of September 2007. Submissions should be addressed to the Inquiry Secretariat, Room G24 Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London SW1A 2NS. Electronic submissions are acceptable and should be sent to [inquiryplds@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:inquiryplds@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

**Your name and/or organisation you are representing<sup>1</sup>:**

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The Independent Inquiry is focusing on the action needed ensure adults and children with learning disabilities receive appropriate treatment in acute medical hospital care and general primary care (not mental health services or specialist learning disability services).

What are the issues that concern you most? Please put the most important things first if you can.

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(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

What, do you think should be done to improve access to appropriate acute medical (hospital) and general primary medical care for people with learning disabilities?

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Please tell us about any examples of good practice that you know.

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(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

If you would be happy to be contacted again, please write your name and address below. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Any personal information that you provide will be held and used in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Such information will be anonymised before publication and will not be retained for longer than necessary."

# **Independent Inquiry into Access to Healthcare for People with Learning Disabilities**

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The Government has set up an independent inquiry into healthcare and treatment for people with a learning disability.

They did this because people with a learning disability can often have worse health than other people. Also people with a learning disability do not always get access to the healthcare and treatment they need.

We want to write a report for the government with advice about how to improve healthcare and treatment. You can tell the inquiry what you think.

There is more information with this letter about how the Inquiry will work.

We will ask questions about medical treatments, including how people get to see the doctor. We want to understand how to make sure people with learning disabilities can get proper treatment and care. We will also want to understand what happens when people with a learning disability go to hospital.

We will listen to patients, families and carers, nurses and doctors and organisations like Mencap, the Disability Rights Commission and the National Patient Safety Agency.

The next page explains how to tell us what you think.



# Independent Inquiry into Access to Healthcare for People with Learning Disabilities

## Who set up the Inquiry?



The inquiry was set up by the Government but it is independent. This means we can make any recommendations we want to.

## Why was it set up?



Because when people with learning disabilities get unwell they sometimes find it hard to get the treatment and care they need. Mencap wrote a report about six people with a learning disability who died and their families complained to the NHS.

## What is happening about the complaints about the people who died?

The Health Service Ombudsman is looking into families' complaints.

## Will the Inquiry meet the families of those who died?

Yes, if they want to meet with us. We would very much like to listen to what they have to say and explain our work. We know they have had a sad and difficult time. We do not want to add to their pain by asking for lots of meetings with them.

## Will the Inquiry panel work closely with the Ombudsman?

Yes, we have talked about our work with the Ombudsman. We will meet the Ombudsman at different times in the year.

## How will the Inquiry work?



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## Who is on the Inquiry team?

The Chairman is Sir Jonathan Michael, a very senior doctor. There are also two expert panels. One panel contains people with experience of providing health and social care services. The other panel contains people with learning disabilities with experience of using services.

## Can I tell the Inquiry what I think?

Yes. By writing to the Inquiry Team at  
Room G24 Richmond House  
Whitehall London SW1A 2NL

Or email to [inquirylds@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:inquirylds@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

Or telephone 020 7210 5878

Or fax 020 7210 9757

## How long will it take?

The inquiry will take about a year.

## How many meetings will panel members attend?

3 or 4 meetings altogether.

## **Will the inquiry be public?**

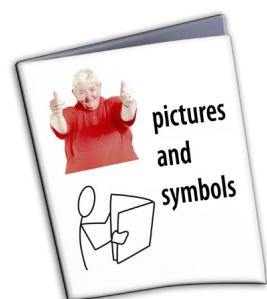


Not completely. We will publish a report at the end but we respect the wishes of anyone who wants to talk to the Inquiry in private.

## **Will the Inquiry look at complaints?**

We will not investigate new complaints about the health service. There is already a system for this. Also, the Department of Health and the Healthcare Commission are looking at how the complaints system can be improved.

## **What will the Inquiry report look like?**



It is too early to say what the report will look like. We want to make sure there is an easy read version. We want it to contain advice for the health service on how to improve healthcare and treatment for people with learning disabilities.

## **Will the Inquiry cover mental health services?**

No.

## **Will the Inquiry cover special services for people with learning disabilities?**

No.