

EASY READ

Intensive community support

The Mental Welfare Commission wants to make sure that everyone's care, treatment and support is allowed by the law, respects the rights and promotes the welfare of people with mental illness, learning disability and related conditions. We do this by empowering people and their carers and guiding service providers and those who make the rules.

Why we do this

People might be at risk because they are not able to look out for their own interests. Someone else might have to decide they need care and treatment. When this happens, we make sure it is allowed by law and is the right thing to do.

Who we are

We are an independent organisation set up by the Scottish Government. We are experienced health and social care staff, service users and carers.

What we stand for

People with mental illness, learning disability and related conditions should have the same rights and respect as anyone else. They have the right:

- to be treated with dignity and respect
- to have treatment that is allowed by law and is the right thing for them
- not to be abused, neglected or discriminated against
- to have care and treatment that is best for their needs
- to get well and have as full a life as possible.

What we do

We work to get the balance right between the person's rights, the law and the care the person gets. We work across all areas of health and social care.

- We find out if a person's care and treatment is allowed by the law.
- We ask service providers to give the very best mental health and learning disability care they can give.
- We follow up on individual cases where we think something is wrong, and may investigate further.
- We give information, advice and help to people, carers and service providers.
- We help to develop services and we help to make new laws about them.
- We help service providers to understand what the mental health and incapacity law says about people's care and treatment.

Why we visit people

The Same as You?, published by the Scottish Executive in 2000, was a national review that set out a plan for improving services for people with learning disabilities.

It said that:

- People with learning disabilities should be able to live normal lives.
- Most people wanted their own homes in the community, and would not get their care in hospitals any more.
- Day services needed to change so they helped people get education, find jobs and have a better quality of life.

In the last few years, changes to the benefits system have made it easier for people to live in their own homes in the community, and make better choices about their care and support.

The Mental Welfare Commission wanted to look at the quality of life, opportunities and choices of people with complex support needs. We visited 202 people across Scotland.

We looked at:

- where they were living
- the support they were getting, and how it helped them to live more independent lives and make choices
- how they worked with professionals to plan their services
- how dangers were handled
- how their rights were being looked after, and who was responsible for this
- how easy it was for them to access the services they need.

What we found – Things that were good

We were happy with the support that most people were getting. Moving from hospitals into their own homes had changed many people's lives.

Housing

Most people were living in good houses and flats. A few were not, but this is being changed.

Support

Nearly all the people had good support plans which gave them the care they needed and were what they wanted.

Service users were able to make choices about what they did every day, and about education, social and leisure activities. Lots of them were learning new skills and becoming more independent.

Service users, relatives, guardians and care managers were mostly happy with how things were going. If there were problems, everyone could agree on what was wrong and how things should be made better.

Health professionals like Community Learning Disability Teams were providing an excellent service and giving good advice, support and treatment.

People were much happier because they were not in hospitals any more.

Health

Most people had good care for their physical health.

Social lives

Families were very important in helping people have social lives. Most care providers worked with families to help with this. Friends were important too.

Dangers

Some people with complex needs were in danger of hurting themselves or others, but most of the people we saw had good support plans to stop this from happening.

What we found – Things that needed to change

We thought that some people needed better care and support, to help them live happy and independent lives, and make friends. All care and support staff should be well trained and managed. We found that some were not.

Services have to be the best they can be. Local authorities must keep looking at the care and support they give and make sure the service user's rights are being protected.

Housing

Some people weren't happy living together. It should be possible to move them to new homes with people they like, or let them have time away from the people they don't get on well with.

Support

A small number of support plans were out of date or did not meet all the needs of the service users. Some plans were quite good but more could be done to make them even better.

Social lives

Service providers should help people to make friends. Some service providers were doing a good job of this, but most service users still said they didn't have friends. Families should be involved more because they are very important in helping people to have social lives.

Planning

Support plans have to be looked at regularly by care managers to make sure the service user is getting the best out of them. Some people had their support plans looked at less often than once a year. We didn't think that was good enough. A support plan should be looked at once every year, at least.

Rights

Some staff didn't properly understand the law, and how it affects people who can't say if they want medical treatment. A doctor has to say that a person isn't able to make those decisions and make a plan for their medical treatment. This plan should be in the person's file. Care providers need to understand this law better.

A small number of people weren't allowed to leave the building where they stayed. Doors and windows were locked and had alarms. They only had limited access to things like mobile phones, cameras and the internet.

Some people had to be physically held down at times, one person had to be kept by themselves sometimes, and another person had to be watched by a CCTV camera. Most of these things were done according to the law and were well managed, but we had worries about how seven of the people were being treated.

We think that if a person's freedom has to be limited in this way, it should be part of their welfare guardianship order and approved by a court.

Conclusion

We were happy to see that a lot of what was set out in **The Same as You?** has happened. A lot of people with complex needs who used to get care in hospitals are now getting care as part of the community.

Most people lived in good quality housing, had good care and support, and were getting good help from learning disability teams. For a lot of people, life has changed for the better and they are much happier. They can develop new skills, do things they enjoy, and spend time with friends and family.

Service users and their families were mostly very pleased with how things were going, but some service users still found it hard to make friends and have relationships outside of their families.

A lot of service providers were giving good care to people with challenging behaviour. Community Learning Disability Teams were giving good support, but we think that some local authorities need to do more. People need to have their care needs looked at regularly – at least once every year.

Service providers need to make sure they are following the law and that they protect the rights of the people they care for.

The report shows how much care and support helps people with learning disabilities. The Scottish Government should take this into account when it is making new plans for people with learning disabilities, to make sure it improves their quality of life.



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