

People First

a voice for people with learning difficulties



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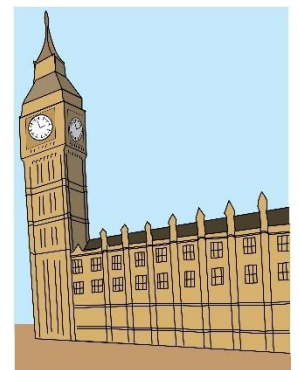
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Press Release

People First Self Advocacy response to Whorlton Hall abuse scandal

29 May 2019



At [People First Self Advocacy](http://www.peoplefirstltd.com) we were horrified to learn of yet another case of abuse and torture of people with Learning Difficulties and Autism. This is from within a system that should be safe and supportive.

After the Panorama programme exposed the abuse at Winterbourne View in 2011, promises were made to move over half of the people in Assessment and Treatment Units (ATUs) back into the community and eventually close them.

Eight years on [Panorama exposed Whorlton Hall](http://www.panorama.co.uk), another shocking case of abuse being missed 'despite at least 100 official visits'.

The Government has not lived up to their promise or met the targets set by NHS England after Winterbourne View. The bodies who have been given the responsibility by the Government to keep us safe have let us down again. The Learning Disability Census (September 2015) reported that 3,230 people with Learning Difficulties were inpatients in NHS and independent services. The latest figures published by NHS Digital on 16 May, tell us that there are 2,245 inpatients with Learning Difficulties. This demonstrates that not enough has been done. We want to know why.

People First Self Advocacy calls for the Government to make Article 19 (Living independently and being included in the community) part of our law - providing us with a statutory right to independent living.

Our [#CloseATUs](#) campaign is not just calling for the closure of ATUs but pressing for people to have the advocacy and support they need in their local communities.

We are also calling for a national action plan for the closures of ATUs to be implemented with immediate effect with a target of two years.

Andrew Lee, Director of People First Self Advocacy said:

‘As with Winterbourne, the news of Whorlton Hall brought tears, upset and anger to me and many other people I know. Our thoughts go to all of the people who experienced this abuse. We need to make sure this does not happen again. Moving people to ‘other’ closed institutions like Whorlton Hall is obviously not the answer. People are being sent far away from friends and

family at great cost to the authorities and at even greater and more tragic cost to people with learning difficulties and their loved ones.'

People First Self Advocacy asks if the regulatory body, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), is using all of its powers to prevent future abuse happening.

Are they asking the right questions, are they looking at the right things, are they actually talking to people with Learning Difficulties?

We need to be able to live safely and independently in the community, like everybody else. We need to be treated with dignity and respect.

Related notes:

[Learning Disability Services Monthly Statistics Provisional Statistics \(AT: April 2019, MHSDS: February 2019 Final\)](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UN CRPD\)](#)

[Article 19 \(UN CRPD\) - Living independently and being included in the community](#)

[Disabled People's Shadow Report to the UN CRPD Committee](#)

[Learning Disability Census Report - England, 30th of September 2015](#)
[Transforming Care for People with Learning Disabilities](#)

[BBC News: Whorlton Hall: Former inspector says warnings were ignored](#)

[BBC News: Whorlton Hall: Hospital abuse missed despite at least 100 official visits](#)

Notes to editors

[People First Self Advocacy](#) is a national organisation run by and for people with learning difficulties. The organisation aims to speak up and campaign for the rights of people with learning difficulties. We also aim to support self-advocacy groups across the country in their work.

We aim to:

- Speak up and campaign for the rights of people with learning difficulties
- Support people with learning difficulties and their self-advocacy groups to build up their skills
- Make sure that the voices of people with learning difficulties are heard by the government and people who make decisions.

Andrew Lee, Director of People First (Self Advocacy)

Christine Spooner, Chair of People First (Self Advocacy)