

Hello,

I would like to pass on some comments on the report.

My interest is in Learning disability in particular when combined with mental health problems/challenging behaviour.

Throughout the document it is highlighted that there are increasing number of people with mental illness and behavioural disorders. If you also have a learning disability you are faced with real disadvantages by the failure of services to meet your needs. In the document I have not read much information about increased funding that will help this disadvantage group.

Your document does not mention one crucial factor "RURALITY". Central government does not recognise the problems and issues faced by rural and island locations when new policies are introduced.

I live in the Western Isles of Scotland where people with disabilities face the challenges of Rurality every day. I do not believe we are the only area to have this problem. This issue should be addressed within the plan, as the problems people with disabilities face who live in a rural area needs to be addressed.

Recommendation 7.18 I would add the NHS along with Local Authorities as they are main employers in most areas.

I know it is not always a good idea to look back at systems that were in place a number of years ago but the predecessor to the DWP put rehabilitation and employer engagement at the forefront of activities to help People with Disabilities into employment. The systems were expensive but they worked. Some of the old ideas could be adopted and modified to help develop new services. E.g. in the past there used to be rehabilitation centres, which specialised in training disabled people get back to work they had specialised equipment and links with employers. This concept could be incorporated into college modules.

I hope the section on independent living will be adopted in Scotland under devolved areas of policy.

I would like to share with you the experience faced by our family, which has left us all traumatised.

My sister is 30 she has learning disabilities and challenging behaviour. She lived with my elderly parents for 29 years, when they could no longer manage her at home she moved into the only residential home on the Island for learning disabilities. After 6 months they found they were unable to manage her care needs. A home was found on the mainland my sister refused to even consider the idea. Our family were united in that we were not against her going as a short term measure but historically people from the islands who left in this way never returned. When Social Workers went to court under the Adult with Incapacity Act to make her move to the home on the mainland. Our family had to challenge this action. In the end a compromise was agreed if she went to the mainland for one year Social Workers would put services in

place for her to return home. My sister never agreed to this and our family had to go against her wishes and allow her to be moved to the mainland. We are now in the situation that my sister has been in the home for 9 weeks she is confined to her room, refusing to eat and believes she has been punished for something. She is getting worse instead of better.

We have been told that we were the first family in Scotland faced with legal action due to service deficiencies. I hope we are the last.

My sister despite her problems was on track to move of benefits into self-employment, she made silk scarves under permitted work. Because her health needs were not addressed her care package could not cope and the outcome is she is now living on the mainland against her will. Her condition is getting worse by the day. Her aim of moving of benefits into employment is no longer an option.

This is an example of how all services have to work together and rurality issues have to be address.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

If you need anything clarified I can be contacted on

Yours

MAIRI MACNEIL