

14 October 2010

For Immediate Publication

Ombudsmen welcome NHS progress on caring for people with learning disabilities, but note there is still a long way to go.

Ann Abraham, the Health Service Ombudsman and Tony Redmond, the Local Government Ombudsman have welcomed the publication of the "[Six Lives](#)" *Progress Report* today.

Speaking about the report Ms Abraham said:

"The Department of Health's report demonstrates that the NHS and social care have taken seriously the issues identified in [Six Lives](#). The report shows progress has been made in improving the quality of care and treatment for people with learning disabilities in some areas and demonstrates how the work of the Ombudsmen can achieve significant change for the benefit of a large group of people.

This open and honest report makes clear the extent of the work which remains to be done and identifies ways of doing this. There is still a long way to go. It is disappointing particularly that local authorities have not focused as closely on the issues as the NHS, given the importance of joint work.

All who work in health and social care need to continue learning the lessons of [Six Lives](#). The challenge of ensuring that all parts of the health and social care system improve the day to day experience and outcomes of those with learning disabilities remains as strong as ever."

Local Government Ombudsman, Tony Redmond said;

"The report rightly recognises that local authorities are central to commissioning learning disability services, whether funded directly or with direct payments that allow them to be contracted privately. I draw encouragement from the evidence that shows good quality care, tailored to individual need and based on informed choice, is a more common experience for people using services. The report highlights how much more needs to be done before this outcome is guaranteed, yet this is a reasonable expectation for all people who use those services.

The care sector reaches across social care and health and is learning to listen better to people who use services, and to the people who advocate for them. Being open and responsive to complaints, ensuring people have support and advocacy assistance when needed, and learning the lessons that complaints can illustrate so powerfully are key ways of maintaining the progress made."

Notes to Editors -

1. The Department of Health's report, ["Six Lives" Progress Report](#), is published in response to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and Local Government Ombudsman's report, [Six Lives: The provision of public services to people with learning disabilities](#). The report recommended that:

First, that all NHS and social care organisations in England should review urgently:

- the effectiveness of the systems they have in place to enable them to understand and plan to meet the full range of needs of people with learning disabilities in their areas; and
- the capacity and capability of the services they provide and/or commission for their local populations to meet the additional and often complex needs of people with learning disabilities; and should report accordingly to those responsible for the governance of those organisations within 12 months of the publication of this report.

Secondly, that those responsible for the regulation of health and social care services (specifically the Care Quality Commission, Monitor and the Equality and Human Rights Commission) should satisfy themselves, individually and jointly, that the approach taken in their regulatory frameworks and performance monitoring regimes provides effective assurance that health and social care organisations are meeting their statutory and regulatory requirements in relation to the provision of services to people with learning disabilities; and that they should report accordingly to their respective Boards within 12 months of the publication of this report.

Thirdly, that the Department of Health should promote and support the implementation of these recommendations, monitor progress against them and publish a progress report within 18 months of the publication of this report.

2. Ann Abraham holds the post of Health Service Ombudsman for England and is also UK Parliamentary Ombudsman. She is appointed by the Crown and is completely independent of Government and the NHS. Her role is to provide a service to the public by undertaking independent investigations into complaints that government departments, a range of other public bodies in the UK, and the NHS in England, have not acted properly or fairly or have provided a poor service.
3. There are three Local Government Ombudsmen in England and they each deal with complaints from different parts of the country. They are appointed by the Crown and are completely independent of local government. Their role is to investigate complaints of injustice arising from maladministration or service failure by local authorities and certain other bodies.
4. The Regulatory Reform Order 2007 provides that with the consent of the complainant the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and the Local Government Ombudsman are able to share information, carry out joint investigations and produce joint reports in respect of complaints that fall within the remit of both Ombudsmen.
5. There is no charge for using the Ombudsmen's services.
6. Visit our websites, www.lgo.org.uk and www.ombudsman.org.uk
7. **Media Enquiries:** For media enquiries, please call the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Press Office on 0300 061 4996 or email press@ombudsman.org.uk or the Local Government Ombudsman, telephone: 020 7217 4686/4734, email: press@lgo.org.uk