**Position Statement**

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**Mental health and learning disability in-patient services**

It is important that people understand learning disability is not a mental health condition. Learning disability and autism is not a health condition either.

People with learning disabilities and people with learning disabilities and autism sometimes need good mental health in patient services.

When our mental health means we need mental health in-patient services, it is important those services are delivered by professionals who understand learning disability and learning disability and autism.

Merging Mental health with learning disability in-patient services is a big problem for lots of reasons:

It confuses the difference between having a learning disability with having a mental health issue.

Some of us have lived experience of what can happen when learning disability is mixed up with mental health in patient services and when our specific needs as people with learning disabilities are misunderstood.

When we are misunderstood, it can lead to all kinds of restrictive practices being used on us. They cause us a lot of upset and make things worse because our needs are not being met.

These negative experiences can even be the cause of us needing mental health support.

When services are provided far from our homes, family and friends, this can make things worse. Especially if our mental health is not good. It is important that we can access the services we need close to home.

It is essential that learning disability in-patient services remain separate from mental health in-patient services.

It is essential where mental health in-patient services are delivered to people with a learning disability, those services are delivered by professionals who have adequate skills and experience of working with people with learning disabilities and people with learning disabilities and autism.

In our experience, where our needs are met in an accessible way and close to home, it could avoid us reaching crisis in the first place.

*“I live in supported living away from my family. When my mental health kicked off, I had no support from them”*

*“I don’t get listened to by professionals”*

*“My carers say ‘get over it’ when I’m having mental health problems. They don’t take me seriously”*

*“The Doctor put me on anti-depressants. I wasn’t really comfortable with that. Good support for me would have been having someone to listen to me”*

*“Not having my needs met really affects my mental health”*

*“When professionals don’t understand learning disability, it affects my mental health”*

*“My local authority want to merge mental health and learning disability services. That’s like going back years where people lived in institutions”*

**Calls to action**

We call on Welsh Government to ensure that provision for mental health in-patient services is not merged with learning disability in patient services.

We call on Welsh Government to ensure that mental health in-patient services which are delivered to people with a learning disability, are delivered by professionals who have adequate skills and experience of working with people with learning disabilities.

We call on Welsh Government to ensure that people with learning disabilities are meaningfully included in any changes to the design and delivery of learning disability in-patient services.

We call on Welsh Government to ensure that learning disability in patient services and mental health support for people with learning disabilities are provided close to home.

We call on Welsh Government to build on the work around bringing the aspirations of the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act to fruition: Services should take a preventative approach. People with learning disabilities must be at the centre of designing and shaping their own services to meet their needs.

**NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!**

Tracy Austin, Chair of the National Council

In consultation with the All Wales People National Council and members.

All Wales People First

