

# Learning Disability and Policy



A time line about the rights of people with learning disabilities.

In the past, people who have learning disabilities had no rights and were not listened to.

In 1900, they lived in large institutions away from towns and cities. Sometimes these were home to over 1000 people. Residents were not allowed any money or possessions. Clothes and shoes were owned by the hospital. People woke in the morning and dressed from the communal wardrobe.

In the 1970s they were moved from big colonies to smaller hospitals and homes.

The 1981 Education Act gave people with learning disabilities the right to an education.

The 1986 Disabled Persons Act gave disabled people some rights but said that people with learning disabilities couldn't make decisions for themselves.

In 1998 My Life My Choice started to help people who have learning disabilities speak up about what they wanted.

The 1998 Disability Discrimination Act made it unlawful to discriminate against people in respect of their disabilities in relation to employment, the provision of goods and services, education and transport.

In 2001 the Government published "Valuing People - A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century", setting out how they will provide new opportunities for people with learning disabilities to live full and independent lives as part of their local communities.

In 2007, Mencap published Death by indifference, which exposed the unequal healthcare and institutional discrimination that people with a learning disability often experience within the NHS, and called for serious action from the government.

In 2008, the Healthcare For All report found that people with learning disabilities have higher levels of unmet need and receive less effective treatment. The report's recommendations include training by people with learning disabilities and says that Primary Care Trusts should consult with "relevant voluntary user-led learning disability organisations."

In 2009, The Department of Health publish "Valuing People Now - A New Three-Year Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities" to act on the recommendations of Death by indifference' and Healthcare for all. It also recognised the need for people with a learning disability to be able to choose where they live and who they live with, and tried to make learning disability partnership boards stronger.