

19<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

By e-mail on behalf of the 55 signatories below

Dear Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP

**Re: Learning Disability and Autism Mandatory Training**

When on 5th November 2019 you, as the Secretary of State, announced new mandatory training for all health and social care staff, you said the training will be named after Oliver McGowan.

We understand this training will include;

- understanding learning disability and autism,
- legislation and rights,
- making reasonable adjustments, such as, using different communication methods for autistic people with sensory sensitivities.

This training is being tested and tried out in different ways in 2020. We understand the pilots are being developed now but are not yet finalised.

**How we feel about this training:**

This must not be a wasted opportunity. We know what works and we know what doesn't work. We must learn from what we have tried before.

We know that recent history is full of stories of avoidable deaths – in most of these stories, the professionals involved would have been taught **about** autism or learning disability in awareness training.

We think this is a great opportunity to do things differently from the start.

The government through DHSC can help change how the whole sector feel and think about people with learning disabilities in how they lead the implementation of this training.

How this training is developed and tested could help change attitudes and support the shifts we all want for people with learning disabilities to live long healthy lives as equal citizens. Ultimately, it can save lives.

### **What we think the training must be:**

Learning **about** autism or learning disability must be in the context of meeting and understanding a range of people who themselves have these conditions.

We must move away from awareness training that implants "what to expect when you meet a person with autism or a learning disability". However well-intentioned, this can lead to the creation of labels and stereotypes that can make it hard to see the person sat before you.

We must move to a programme that gives professionals techniques and strategies to see the fellow human being who sits before them and spot for themselves when labels or stereotypes might be creeping in.

### **How we think this must be done:**

Understanding learning disabilities and autism starts by **understanding people** who have a learning disability or autism, and their families.

The training programme must include people with learning disabilities as equal partners in deciding on the content, format, methods, quality frameworks and evaluation.

Family members and organisations with expertise in working with people with learning disabilities also must be equal partners in the development, delivery and evaluation of the training pilots.

There is a lot of experience and expertise in delivering the required training in self-advocacy, family led and community groups across the country, as well as more formal programmes led by larger organisations.

That wide expertise could be brought into a network of local and regional user led provision that forms the basis of the pilot programme. Larger national providers have a lot to offer, but they should be required to partner (equally) with these organisations. We believe this must be a network, not dominated by one or two organisations, but bringing together different skills and experiences and led by people with learning disabilities as the key decision makers working with DHSC and partners.

We ask that as a government you start by taking positive action on this and show how you value everyone as equals.

Yours sincerely,

**Acre Housing**, Chris Ingram

**Advance**, Julie Layton

**Aldingbourne Trust**, Sue Livett

**Bexley Mencap**, Kara Lee

**Brighton and Hove Speakout**, Sarah Pickard

**British Institute of Learning Disabilities**, Ben Higgins

**Camphill Village Trust**, Sharon Nicholson

**Certitude**, Aisling Duffy

**Choice Care Group**, Edwina Johnston

**Choice Housing**, Nigel Downs

**Choice Support**, Sarah Maguire

**Cloverleaf Advocacy**, Suzi Henderson

**Dimensions**, Steve Scown

**Disability Rights UK**, Sue Bott

**Disability Sheffield**, Emily Morton

**Down Syndrome UK**, Nicola Enoch  
**Essex Carers Network**, Eleanor September  
**Getta Life**, Sue Deeley  
**Grace Eyre**, Eva Eriksson  
**Imagine Act and Succeed**, Ruth Gorman  
**Inclusion North**, Karen Parry  
**KeyRing**, Karyn Kirkpatrick  
**L'Arche**, Loren Treisman  
**Learning Disability England**, Scott Watkin, Jordan Smith, Wendy Burt  
**Lets For Life**, Catherine Bennett  
**Lewisham Nexus Service**, Andrea Wiggins  
**Lewisham Speak Up**, Peter Cronin  
**MacIntyre**, Sarah Burslem  
**My Life My Choice**, Paul Scarrott  
**My Life My Way**, Kath Bromfield  
**My Safe Home Limited**, David Abbey  
**National Development Team for Inclusion**, Madeline Cooper-Ueki,  
**New Prospects**, Ellen Vick  
**Open StoryTellers**, Alex MacNeil  
**Our Vision Our Future**, Maria Britland  
**Outlook Care**, Piotr Rejek  
**Oxfordshire Family Support Network**, Gail Hanrahan  
**Pathways Associates**, Lynn James Jenkinson  
**People First Dorset**, Laura Kerr  
**People First Forum – BCP**, Amanda Parsons  
**Positive Support For You CIC**, Dave Barras  
**PossAbilities**, Rachel Law  
**Royal Mencap Society**, Oonagh Smyth

**Shared Lives Plus**, Alex Fox

**Southampton Mencap**, Alexandra Iles

**Speakup**, Annie Ferguson

**Sunderland People First**, Lisa Clark

**Talk Back**, Jeremy Hay

**The Big Red Food Shed Ltd**, Julie Lowe

**The Ups of Downs**, Caroline Warren

**The Westminster Society**, Gabrielle Machell

**Three Cs**, Jo Clare

**Together All Are Able**, Vicky Buckingham

**Voyage Care**, Andrew Cannon

**Wiltshire People 1<sup>st</sup>**, Angie Carmichael

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