How hospitals separate children and young people who have a mental health problem or a learning disability or autism

May 2019

Easy read version of ‘Segregation in mental health wards for children and young people and in wards for people with a learning disability or autism: May 2019’

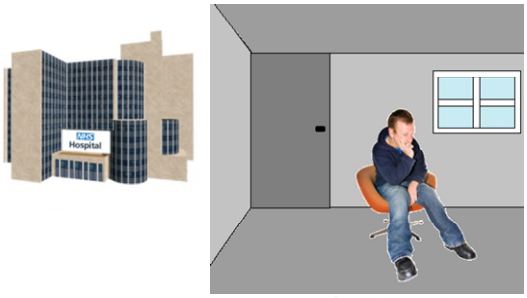
Contents

Who we are and what we do

We are the Care Quality Commission (CQC). We check care services like hospitals and care homes.

We check that they are doing a good job and the people who use the service are safe and being looked after properly.

About this report



This report talks about the first things we have seen when checking how hospitals **segregate** people.

These are segregated children, young people and adults who have a **learning disability** or **autism**.

We also looked at children and young people with a mental health problem.

When we say **segregate**, we mean when staff keep a person in a separate part of the building for a long time and do not let them mix with other people.

When we say **learning disability**, we mean:

- When people have difficulty understanding information.

- They may need help and support with some everyday tasks.

- This will have started before the person was 18 years old.

When we say **autism**, we mean:

- Autism is a disability. It is not an illness or disease.

- People have autism for their lives.

- It affects how people deal with other people and how they understand the world around them.

Our findings

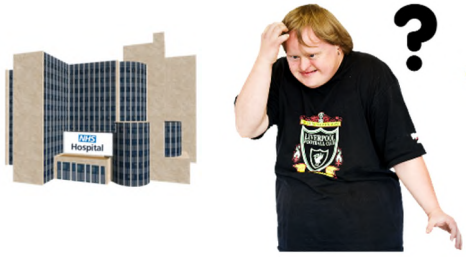
We visited 39 people who were being segregated in a hospital ward.

On average, they were living 54 miles (87 kilometres) from their homes.

- Many of the people had a troubled childhood and had lived in different places.

This was mainly because the places couldn’t look after their needs.

- 31 out of the 39 people in segregation had autism.



- Some of the wards were not designed for people with autism.

- Many staff did not have the right training and skills to work with people with autism who also have **behaviour that is seen to be challenging**.

- Some people were not receiving good care and treatment or did not have the right checks to see what their needs were.

- For 26 out of the 39 people, staff were no longer trying to help them live on the main ward.

This was usually because they were concerned the person would cause harm to themselves or other people.

For 25 people, staff thought their quality of life was better in segregation than staying in the open ward.

- 13 out of the 39 people were unable to leave segregation as planned because there was no place for them to go if they left hospital.

When we say **behaviour that is seen to be challenging**, we mean:

When people do things that cause problems for themselves or other people.

- It can mean lots of different behaviours:
  - The person might get angry or upset.

  - The person might break things.

  - The person might hurt themselves or other people.

  - The person might do things that get them into trouble with the police.

- Usually people do not behave in this way. It happens when things are not right for them.

- When they do behave like this, they might need extra help.

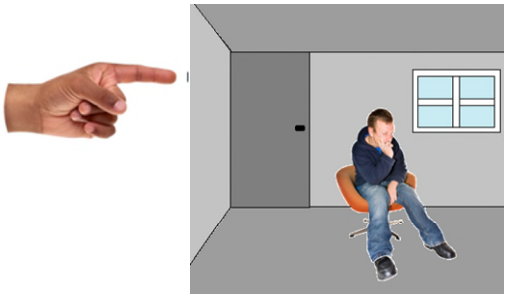
What our findings tell us

- The way hospitals give care is not good enough for people who are put in segregation in a hospital.

- Many people who use services did not get the help they needed when they were children.

- Some people were taken to hospital when they were children because it was the only place for them to go. This may have made them feel more upset or angry and a danger to themselves and others.

- The staff on the ward may not have had the right training to understand and deal with these behaviours. This is why they thought the only safe thing to do was put the person in a separate part of the building away from other people.



- People could then get stuck in segregation.

What needs to happen next

Not everyone had bad experiences of care. Some people did have very good care when we visited them.

But lots of people told us the same things.

This helped us decide what we think needs to happen:

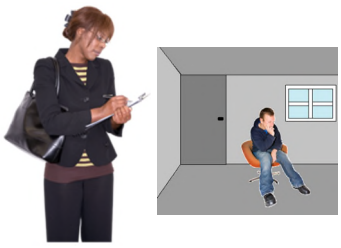
1. Over the next year, there should be a study into the care of people who are segregated on a ward for children and young people or on a ward for people with a learning disability or autism.

This should include people who have been segregated.

2. A group of experts should look at how to care for this group of people better. This should include people from different countries who have different ideas.

3. We need to think more about how people who may be segregated are kept safe. This includes how they are supported by people who speak up for them.

4. Services that may segregate people should think hard about how it may affect their rights. This may lead to them being treated in a better way.



5. We should use these findings to change how we check services that may use segregation.

We will carry on looking at this area and do more checks.

We will write another report in March 2020 when we have finished our review.

What to do if you have any questions

Email us your general questions at:

enquiries@cqc.org.uk

Email us about this piece of work at:

RSSthematic@cqc.org.uk

You can read more about this at:

https://www.cqc.org.uk/rssthematic

You can call us on:

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