

06/05/2020

To the Chief Executive,

Thank you for taking the time to read this email in these extremely challenging circumstances for your organisation, and your staff.

It is well researched and understood that people with a learning disability frequently miss out on the healthcare they need, sometimes with devastating consequences.

The covid-19 crisis puts people with a learning disability at even greater risk. We are greatly concerned by reports that clinical decisions have been made about individuals based on their disability, including DNACPRs, as well as reports that learning disability nurses may be redeployed.

You may already be familiar with Mencap's Treat me well campaign, which aims to transform how the NHS treats people with a learning disability.

The campaign highlights simple reasonable adjustments - better communication, more time and clear information - that can make a significant difference to the health outcomes of people with a learning disability.

As well as highlighting the importance of reasonable adjustments, I would like to draw your attention to the vital role that learning disability nurses play at this time.

We recognise the importance of adapting the way that individuals, organisations and entire systems must work to respond to the current crisis effectively, but learning disability nurses must remain focused on supporting people with a learning disability, in hospitals and in the community.

With resources limited and decisions being made under extreme pressure, learning disability nurses can help to ensure that local services meet the complex health and support needs of people with a learning disability, making sure they get the best possible treatment, adapted to their needs.

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Chairman
Derek Lewis

Chief executive
Edel Harris

Crucially learning disability nurses can provide specialist support to other healthcare professionals and help make reasonable adjustments, such as assisting communication between the doctor and patient. Without this support, it will be harder for doctors to treat people with a learning disability.

Whether they are supporting efforts to keep people well in the community and avoid hospital admissions, or ensuring that those in hospital are able to access the care they need, learning disability nurses are an important resource at this time.

Therefore, we are writing to ask you that when making decisions about your workforce at this time, or contributing to decision making in your area, you ensure that your systems are able to respond to the needs of people with a learning disability, making best use of the important role that learning disability nurses are able to play.

Thank you for your time and continued support.

Edel Harris

Chief Executive, Royal Mencap Society

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