

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS HEALTHCARE ISSUES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

A damning report by the Health Service and Local Government Ombudsmen highlights the plight of people with learning disabilities in East and West Sussex, according to a local charity.

The ombudsmen said the standard of care was an 'indictment of our society' after reviewing the deaths of six people across the country.

However, the findings have come as no surprise to staff at Hove-based Grace Eyre, a charity that provides a wide range of services to adults with learning disabilities.

Explained Grace Eyre Director, Eva Jarvis: "This is an issue that we have campaigned on for a number of years and whilst we have seen some improvements a lot still remains to be done to ensure that people with learning disabilities receive appropriate treatment and care."

"Although the ombudsmen's report looked at acute NHS services, we have also identified problems at primary care level. As a result we are now working alongside local authorities and NHS Trusts to support them in ensuring that our service users receive care that is appropriate to their needs.

"We have also received support from Celia Barlow, our local Hove MP, who is looking to ensure that trainee doctors and nurses undertake placements with organisations that support people with learning disabilities as a way of better understanding their needs."

The ombudsmen were called in to investigate the deaths of six people between 2003 and 2005 after concerns were raised by the national charity MENCAP. The investigation found one man died as a result of failings in his care, while a second death could have been avoided.

It also found failings by hospitals, local health bosses, the official NHS regulator and social care services provided by councils, although none of the complaints against GPs were upheld.

Included in the investigation was the death of Warren Cox, 30, from St Leonards, East Sussex. In the case the complaints were not upheld, although some aspects of his care were criticised.

Continued Eva: "All these case are tragic and I hope that lessons will be learned by everyone involved in providing healthcare services and we will continue to raise awareness of the problems faced by people with learning disabilities."

"One area that we are actively involved in at the moment is promoting healthy lifestyles and to do this we need to encourage wider participation in sport through events such as the Special Olympics to be held in Leicester later this year," she added.

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