These are Our Children

Review January 2017
About this document

This document was made by CHANGE, a charity led by people with learning disabilities.

This document uses easy words and pictures to help you understand more about what a medium secure mental health service for adults is.

You might want to read it with someone else to help you understand it.

There is a Word Bank at the back of the booklet to help with hard words. Any words in **bold** you can find in the Word Bank on page 28.
This document is a review written by Dame Christine Lenehan, the Director of the Council for Disabled Children.

The Department of Health asked her to write this document.

The review looks at children with complex needs after some individual cases drew the attention of the public and of authorities.

To write this review, Dame Lenehan worked with important people who know about the issues this group of children and young people face.
These children are already cared for by the NHS and the local authorities.

Some are treated and cared for in inpatient units.

For some, treatment and care in inpatient units is a good choice.
This is because they need special treatment and care that can only be offered in these units.

But many times inpatient units end up being places where these children and young people have to stay for long periods of time. This is wrong!

This document looks at what can be done to change things so that children and young people with complex needs don’t end up in these inpatient units just because there is nowhere else to send them.
Dame Lenehan has included her recommendations in this review.

She chose to make recommendations which she believes can become reality and will make a difference.

Special thanks to all who have helped Dame Christine Lenehan write this review by offering their support and sharing their experience.
2.5% of people in the UK have a learning disability. They will need specialist services at some point in their childhood.

More people in this group will suffer from a significant mental health problem than people without a learning disability.

Children and young people with complex needs and challenging behaviours are part of this category.

Sometimes, the Government does not have a lot of money to spend to help these children and young people.
Local authorities and institutions looking after children with special needs often cannot provide the early specialised treatment and care they need.

Because of this, they end up slipping through the net, ending up in inpatient units.

This costs a lot of money, around 1 million pounds for every child every 3 years.

There are no suitable community services for these children to return to so they get stuck in inpatient units.
There are many government programmes that work and support children and young people with complex needs. They all play a role at some point in the children’s lives.

Unfortunately, they do not all work together to come up with a solution.

Recommendations

Based on her work and research, Dame Christine Lenehan would like to put forward her recommendations about what could be done to make things better for children with complex needs.
Recommendation 1
Children’s Rights

The Department of Health should make sure children with mental health issues are treated in the same way as children with physical health issues.

NHS England should include these children’s rights in their constitution to make sure that all decisions affecting children are right.

Public Health England should make sure they keep these rights in mind in their You’re Welcome Standards review.
The Department of Education should work together with the Department of Health, NHS England and Public Health England to see how Residential Special Schools can help children and young people with complex needs.

Local services should consider these children and young people’s right to a childhood when commissioning or delivering support.

**Recommendation 2**

**Residential Special Schools and Colleges**

The Department of Education should work together with the Department of Health, NHS England and Public Health England to see how Residential Special Schools can help children and young people with complex needs.
Recommendation 3
Young people aged 18 to 25 in Inpatient Units

The Department of Health, Department of Education and NHS England should urgently look at the situation of young people with complex needs aged 18 to 25 who are in inpatient units.

These young people should not end up living the rest of their lives in institutions.

They should look at how many are in these units, how they got admitted and what will happen to them in the future.

This information will then help them decide how to make sure young people don’t stay too long in inpatient units.
At this moment, each service is doing their part in supporting children and young people with complex needs.

Services need to take the lead and be held responsible for what happens overall to these children and young people.

Because of their complex needs, these children and young people do not fall into one category or another; they do not have just one mental or physical health issue.
Services can often give support on one issue.

They are sometimes not prepared to support more than one special need at a time.

The Department of Education, Transforming Care Partnerships, The association of Directors of Children’s Services, and the Local Government Association should work together to decide what is the best way to care for children and young people with complex needs.
Their work can then be used as an example to other services.

They must look at what happens after they leave Assessment and Treatment Units, and when they move into Adult Services.

Recommendation 5
Professional Responsibility

The Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and the Royal College of General Practitioners need to work together.
They need to discuss the responsibility medical and other professionals have for children and young people with **complex needs.**

After these discussions, they can develop a set of recommendations for all professionals to follow around the country.

It is important that a child with **complex needs** gets a keyworker who would manage their care and treatment.
The keyworker would also support them and their families.

This will help families make informed choices about their children.

The keyworker will offer them the support they need to access the right services.
Recommendation 6
Local Authority Role

Local Authorities should make sure that children and young people from their area or town, who are placed in a different area or town, are cared for with dedication and full support.

The two local authorities involved in the treatment and care of the young person should communicate and share responsibility.

This makes sure that each young person is safeguarded and supported.

When the family is still in contact with the child or young person, Local Authorities need to include and support them.
Each child or young person with complex needs who is in an inpatient unit or at risk of being admitted to one should have a keyworker.

This keyworker should be from a health or local authority service, and be in touch with both.

This person should be based in the child’s local area.

They should have the experience and knowledge to support the child and their family through the system.
There are local and national groups where services work together to assess, plan, make decisions, and review.

The Department of Health should take the lead to work with the Department of Education, the Department of Communities and Local Government, and other Arms Length Bodies to make sure they plan together.

These services should have ways of communicating to each other and sharing information between teams.
They should also look at the guidance from the National Development Team for Inclusion and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation.

This is because it applies to children and young people with complex needs too.

NHS England, the Association of Directors of Children’s Services, and the Local Government Association should support Transforming Care Partnerships to apply the Service Model.
Local authorities may not have the money, the right services or the knowledge to commission for them.

Commissioning for children and young people with complex needs doesn’t work as well as it should at the moment.

This is because there is not enough awareness of this group and because nobody takes overall responsibility of them.

Local authorities may not have the money, the right services or the knowledge to commission for them.
Most times in the evening or at weekends the only safe place to go in a crisis situation is the A&E.

Services for children and young people with complex needs that are available out of hours are rare.

Local inpatient units are not always available or do not have enough beds available, especially in the South of the country.
Support for children and young people with the most complex needs is most difficult.

When children with complex needs leave impatient care and don’t have somewhere to go, the services that could give them a place don’t always put their needs first.

This means they are aren’t first on the list to be admitted.

Services suffer from not having enough staff or not having the right staff available.
Some staff don’t have the skills needed to care for children and young people with complex needs.

Organisations that train them need to find out what skills and knowledge they are missing and offer training.
The Department of Health and the Department of Education should work closely with local education, voluntary, and community services to support children and young people with complex needs.

These local services should get the money they need to change services and make them work better.
Services supporting these children and young people after they leave inpatient units need more financial support.

If supported living services can have enough money, children and young people with complex needs can leave inpatient units and not get stuck in them.
Admitted

When a person is admitted it means they officially go into a service or institution.

For example a person could be admitted into hospital or into a supported living service.

Autism

Autism is a mental condition that starts to show in early childhood.

Someone with autism usually finds it difficult to communicate and make relationships with other people.

They can also find language and understanding some things difficult and show **challenging behaviour**.
Challenging Behaviour

When someone’s behaviour is so difficult that it affects the quality of life and the safety of themselves and those around them.

Commissioning

Commissioning is planning, agreeing, paying for and managing services.

Complex Needs

When someone has complex needs it means that they have an illness, disability or sensory impairment that means they needs a lot of support for them to live day to day.

Someone might have been born with complex needs or have complex needs because of an illness or injury.
Learning Disability

A learning disability affects the way a person learns new things. People with a learning disability might take longer to learn or find some everyday tasks very difficult.

Financial Incentive

A financial incentive is when a person or a service is given a reward in money or extra funding to motivate them to do something.