



## Rising to the Challenge

**My work with people with learning disabilities started 25 years ago, with two of our members, CMG and Certitude, getting people out of Leavesden Hospital in Hertfordshire.**

Those who had been institutionalised; professionals, families and people themselves did not believe it was possible for people to live ordinary lives in their communities. 25 years later people supported by good organisations have proved them wrong. We thought we had won

this battle but here we are again in 2015, fighting to get people out of modern day hospitals. It shouldn't be like this.

There are no doubts that the current economic climate poses a threat but what we also see, often where there is plenty of money, is poor care, neglect and

abuse. It doesn't cost anything to listen to what people want, to respect people and their families and to focus our organisations around the people we serve. We can spend the money we have in the system much better and we should not be spending what we have on poor care.

People with learning disabilities, their families and the organisations that support them, are facing some of the biggest challenges ever getting the support they need to live good lives in their communities. Despite these challenges, we still see really good support, really good housing and people

with learning disabilities leading ordinary and rich lives. I feel proud to work with some of our members, providers and commissioners, who get this and show us how it can be done.

These unprecedented challenges require us to do things differently, so this year People First England and H&SA members are coming together as people, families and organisations so that we are stronger. We need a way to not only challenge the wrongs but to actually do something about them, together. We look forward to rising to this challenge with you.

**Alicia Wood, CEO H&SA.**

## Affordable housing and affordable support

**Affordable housing and affordable support are the two 'stand out' challenges for providers wanting to deliver supported living options.**



Affordable housing is a national problem. It will be one of the most significant barriers to the expansion of supported living and there is no obvious end in sight. Not everyone with a

learning disability is poor, but the vast majority of people with a learning disability live below the average personal income level. At a stroke this rules out buying a home or renting from some private landlords. People with a learning disability are competing with everyone else who does not have enough income to buy a home or afford high private rents for the decreasing pool of affordable social housing.

Most providers are looking at ways that they can raise capital so that they can secure housing. This includes, for example: using their own capital reserves, borrowing money in various ways, and/or getting someone else to invest in property that can then be

used to create supported living options. Housing Associations with their declining rent levels will have less money to spend on development and this will mean less social housing for everyone who needs it including people with a learning disability.

Affordable support is really about what the state is willing to spend on people with a learning disability to support their independence. The story here is more complex. People with a learning disability in receipt of services funded by local authorities have for the most part seen substantially less reductions in support income than any other group - especially older people.

Having said this, as the Government pushes ahead with its goal of significantly lower public spending and lower taxes the resources for the state to pay for support will decline. This will mean that the level of support available will also fall and some people will no longer get the chance to experience a more independent life as a result.

There are no cure-alls for these challenges but a need to think differently about how they are addressed. At the last H&SA annual conference I said in terms of supported living that you could not rely on the state.

Solutions will be about compromise, opportunism and partnership but also about stepping outside the learning disability bunker and seeing what is happening in the wider world of social care.

If we were talking about older people then we would be talking about people making provision for their old age. We will need to start thinking about the idea of families taking more responsibility, specifically financial responsibility, if more people with a learning disability are to enjoy an independent life. This flies in the face of what many people have grown to expect, but whether right or wrong, in the current environment the question will be asked why is it that we expect people to make provision for their old age which is no less inevitable than the ongoing support needs of a person with a learning disability.

For the foreseeable future the state will continue to shoulder the largest proportion of cost for the support of people with a learning disability but without additional funds the 'state offer' will have to become poorer, less person centred and less effective.

**Tom Noon, Chairman Cordis Bright**  
[www.cordisbright.co.uk](http://www.cordisbright.co.uk)