



Defending Residential Choices for People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism

A fundamental Human Right is not being met for people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

The European Court of Human Rights, Article 2:1 states: “Everyone [...] Shall have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to CHOOSE [their] residence”. The Care Quality Commission’s (CQC) guidelines state the provision of CHOICE lies at the heart of all policy making: “the underpinning principles of choice [...] are fundamental to what a good service looks like for every person” (*Registering the Right Support*, 2017). Yet, the full spectrum of **CHOICE** of residence is not currently being given to people with learning disabilities and/or autism, and their families.

CHOICE is denied.

Just as there is complete freedom of choice in the general population of where we live, people with learning disabilities and/or autism should have the right to choose where they live. This may be in the heart of a vibrant city, in quieter suburbs, or in a smaller town, village, or group community. This full spectrum of **CHOICE** of residence should be at the centre of guidelines that regulate any service that currently, or intends to, provide regulated care to people with autism and people with a learning disability.

However, the CQC in its statutory guidance explicitly denies a **CHOICE** of living in new group or village communities and places unachievable requirements on existing communities. For example, the CQC asserts that it will not register or favourably rate new campus or congregate settings (*Right Support, Right Care, Right Culture*, 2020). This narrative has been used by CQC inspectors and external care providers to justify the closure of group and village communities, equating them to ‘campuses’, regardless of the quality of care provided.

Since 2006, we believe at least 40 such residential care communities have been forced to close and in 2020 the CQC made closures easier by asserting it will not support ‘campus’ models of care. Closures have uprooted people with learning disabilities and/or autism from their homes, against their wishes, and moved them into new, often isolated, and unfamiliar locations. Although the CQC claims **CHOICE** is at the forefront of policy and care, their current guidelines are enabling **CHOICE** of residence to be denied.

What needs to be done:

The ‘**Our Life Our CHOICE**’ campaign seeks an update to CQC and other guidance to make it clear to care providers, local authority commissioning teams and those involved in provision of care for people with learning disabilities and/or autism that well managed and regulated group and village communities should be considered equally alongside small urban and rural residential living, supported living, and independent living. Guidelines should not impose bias against such communities based on geographical location or size of the community. Guidelines and policy should recognise that for some individuals, these communities offer people’s **CHOSEN** quality of life.

People with learning disabilities and/or autism should not face the discrimination created by the denial of a CHOICE of residence which is open to all other members of society.

Support us in this vital mission.

Email: contact@ourlifeourchoice.co.uk Phone: 07789 416604
www.ourlifeourchoice.co.uk