



## **WHY IS CHOICE BEING DENIED:**

Since 2000 the guidance and policies surrounding residential services for people with a learning disability and / or autism has been developed based on fundamental key principles of Rights, Independence, Choice, and Inclusion at its heart.

For people with a learning disability and / or autism, choice was recognized in 'valuing people' as specifically including village and intentional communities. Though not mentioned specifically the right to choose from any housing option was repeated in 'valuing people now'. These policy documents did not seek to prescribe best practice for residential services depending on the nature of a person's learning disability but promoted choice based on person centred support and care.

Focus turned abruptly to NHS hospitals and secure assessment institutions following the BBC investigation into Winterbourne view in 2011 and a raft of guidance and policy was published that specifically addressed people with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges, including those with a mental health condition who were considered to represent the main group of people in these institutional services.

These policies were developed based on research focussing on these institutions and the people living in them, research that never includes data on village or intentional community settings.

This all lead to the production, in 2015 of a National plan, 'building the right support' and an accompanying service model, providing best practice guidelines specifically for people with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges, including those with a mental health condition. These guidelines aim for closure of NHS hospitals, NHS campuses and secure assessment centres and development of community based residential services such as supported living.

Finally, in 2017 the CQC published its regulatory guidance on registration of care services including residential care, 'Registering the right support' revised in 2020 to become 'right support, right care, right culture'. This guidance took all of the policies related to people with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges, including those with a mental health condition and related it not just to this group but expanded it to all people with a learning disability or autism.

The consequence of this is that guidance does not allow for any choice of residential service that represents a village or intentional community even though the very research that is used to develop this guidance excludes villages and intentional communities from its findings and in some cases determines that such choice is beneficial for some people. None of the research that reports favourably on village / intentional communities is referenced in any of the published guidance or supporting documentation.

No such discriminative guidance exists for any other CQC regulated residential care communities such as retirement, dementia, or nursing communities

The CQC has equality of choice of where to live for people with a learning disability and / or autism as a foundation of its policy. This choice should therefore include well-regulated village / intentional communities just as the general population can choose to live in a village setting, a private gated community, a kibbutz community, a dementia community, a retirement community, or an eco-community.