

Young Physically Disabled Adults Out of Sight and Mind

Young adults who are severely 'physically' disabled with conditions such as acquired brain injury, visual impairment, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, congenital ataxia, brain tumour, Huntington's Disease or early stroke and Parkinson's Disease are a seriously neglected group. There are about 8,000 such people in Scotland: about 1,200 resident in care homes and the remainder in their own homes.

The attached Briefing Paper highlights the problems faced by the majority of these individuals: inadequate or non-existent rehabilitation services (leading sometimes to permanent physical damage); social isolation; difficult and tortuous processes for accessing services; a focus on what people cannot do rather than on what they can (and could) do; little or no opportunity for meaningful activity or employment; young physically disabled people accommodated in care homes primarily catering for older people; some younger people placed in care homes inappropriately; minimal or no specialist services for younger care home residents.

The Briefing Paper elaborates on these difficulties, and shows that much could be done to improve the health and quality of life of young 'physically' disabled people at little or no cost: by more effective, efficient and creative deployment of existing resources. People with learning difficulties benefited greatly a decade or so ago from the development of services developed to

meet their particular needs. The time for similar action for young physically disabled people is long overdue.

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