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To Chief Executives of PCTs and Councils

Gateway reference number 10531:

Launch of Valuing People Now

The Secretary of State for Health today **launched Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities**. This is a cross- government strategy and is accompanied by a Delivery Plan and the government's further response to the Joint Committee on Human Rights Report *A Life Like Any Other?*

Whilst considerable progress has been made in some areas since Valuing People was published in 2001, much remains to be done:

- the Social Exclusion Task Force identified people with moderate and severe learning disabilities as one of the most excluded groups in our society;
- only 15% of people have a home of their own;
- more than 30% of people with learning disabilities live in residential care homes, a significant proportion of which are miles away from their place of origin and their families;
- many people with learning disabilities are living with older family carers who have their own needs;
- only one in ten of those known to social services has any form of paid employment, and of those only few work more than 16 hours a week;
- people with learning disabilities report that they are often the target of hate crime, that they are dependant on very limited and expensive public transport to get around, and that being lonely is one of the things they fear most;
- the 2008 report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, *A life like any Other?*, highlighted continued and extensive

failure of services and society to accord people with learning disabilities their basic rights;

- *Healthcare for all*, the report of the Independent inquiry into access to healthcare for people with learning disabilities, reported significant and ongoing inequalities in access to healthcare services and in the quality of services;
- Some Local partnership Boards have been empowered and supported to develop effective strategies, but overall the effectiveness of Partnership Boards has been patchy.

Making Valuing People Now happen will take effective leadership across the Government, Local Authorities, the NHS, the voluntary, private sectors, and other statutory agencies: Local Authority Cabinets, Primary Care Trust Boards, Acute and Mental Health NHS Trust Boards, Strategic Partnerships and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. All have key roles to play if people with learning disabilities are truly to take their place in society as citizens, with the same human rights as everyone, the same opportunities for good health, housing, jobs, and leisure opportunities and freedom from harassment, crime and discrimination.

Six key priorities have been set for 2009-10 for the Valuing People Now work programme:

- to raise awareness of *Valuing People Now* across national and local government, private and voluntary sectors, and within wider society;
- to have an effective Learning Disability Partnership Board operating in every Local Authority;
- to secure access to, and improvements in, healthcare, with Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) responsible for, and leading, this work;
- to increase the range of housing options for people with learning disabilities and their families, including closure of NHS campuses;
- to ensure that the personalisation agenda is embedded within all local authority services and developments for people with learning disabilities and their family carers, and is underpinned by person centred planning; and
- to increase employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

We will review progress against these priorities annually through the cross-government National Learning Disability Programme Board. Regional Learning Disability Boards are now being established linked to Strategic Health Authorities and Government Offices to support and report on progress in implementing the strategy. They will work with local Partnership Boards.

You have a very important role to play in raising awareness of Valuing People Now and ensuring work is ongoing to secure improvements against the key priorities.

In March, a resource pack will be published to support the dissemination of the Strategy. This will include a DVD, which I hope will be used at Board, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny meetings and Partnership Boards.

Over 10,000 people responded to the consultation on Valuing People Now. The overriding message from people with learning disabilities and family carers is that they want all agencies to

**Make it Happen for Everyone
and
Make it Happen Everywhere**

Working together, I am confident we can do this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Anne Williams'.

Anne Williams
National Director for Learning Disabilities