

## PROJECT FOCUSES ON PEOPLE WITH



# Tragedy of city patients who die 25 years too soon

**EXCLUSIVE**  
By LINZI WATSON

**P**EOPLE with learning disabilities are dying up to 25 years earlier than others because of poor access to health care, it is claimed.

These patients are also four times more likely to die from a treatable disease than the general population, according to a study.

The inequalities faced by people with learning disabilities in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area are the subject of

investigation by Liz Smith and Allison O'Donnell, who led the project Learning Disabilities and Palliative Care: Building Bridges - Supporting Care.

They presented their case at a conference organised by Glasgow's Prince And Princess Of Wales Hospice.

Ms Smith, a palliative care nurse who works with the hospice in the education team, said: "People with learning disabilities die 16 to 25 years earlier than the general population.

"We are looking at the care they receive to establish why this is the case.

"We have found a number of reasons, including communication issues and patients not having the same access to cancer screening services."

She added: "This marginalised population with complex care needs are often suffering from more than two health care issues."

A recent inquiry into the deaths of people with learning disabilities found that men died 13 years sooner than men in the general population, and women with learning disabilities died 20 years earlier.

The inquiry focused

on people living in south west England, but Ms O'Donnell, a learning disability nurse, said: "Although the figures are not directly related to the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area they are relevant.

**These patients do not have the same access to pain management**

"In fact, the general health of people living here is worse."

Ms O'Donnell, who worked in Renfrewshire before being seconded to work on the project, added: "We know that people with learning

# LEARNING DISABILITIES



■ Allison O'Donnell and Liz Smith outlined their case at a Glasgow conference

## Green light for £18m hospice plan

PLANS for Glasgow's £18million new hospice have been given the green light by councillors.

The design for the site at Bellahouston Park was given unanimous backing by Glasgow City Council's planning committee.

Rhona Baillie, chief executive of the Prince And Princess Of Wales Hospice, has heralded a "major milestone" in the campaign to make the project a reality.

The Brick by Brick Appeal - backed by the Evening Times - is trying to raise £15m to complete the build.

The hospice will cover 5800sq metres over three floors and will include a 14-bed in-patient unit, a day service, out-patients unit, education, administration and clinical offices.

As well as an enhanced service for adults, there will be a specialist unit for young people aged 15 and above.

Speaking at the site for the new hospice, clinical adviser Libby Milton, who has been involved in developing the design, said: "I have been working with patients and

families and I know what a massive difference the new facility will make to these people's lives.

"I was overjoyed to hear the plans had been approved."

Ms Baillie said: "Obtaining the planning committee approval is a major milestone towards building a new hospice for Glasgow.

"This decision starts us on the road to making the new facility a reality.

"Our current home at Carlton Place is at capacity and has served us exceptionally well for over 30 years.

"The new facility will enable us to extend our services to the people of Glasgow in purpose-built facilities situated in the stunning surroundings of Bellahouston Park."

To learn more or to make a donation, see the website: [www.ppwh.org.uk/brickbybrick](http://www.ppwh.org.uk/brickbybrick)  
Call on 0141 429 9861 or e-mail [brickbybrick@ppwh.org.uk](mailto:brickbybrick@ppwh.org.uk)  
Send donations, made payable to 'The Brick by Brick Appeal', to: The Prince & Princess of Wales Hospice, Freepost SCO1724, Glasgow, Q5 9BR.



Evening Times APPEAL

disabilities are four times more likely to die from a preventable cause.

"They are 58 times more likely to die before the age of 50.

"We are finding that people with learning disabilities do not have the same access to pain

management because of communication problems.

"There is also the issue of discrimination."

Ms Smith added that breaking bad news about a diagnosis or life expectancy following illness to a person with a learning

disability must be done in a measured way.

She said research suggested that although some families chose to protect these patients from the truth it was not always best for them.

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