



## **Mental Health: Lennox Castle**

*The Beginning of Change*

### **Howard:**

I suppose that question from an outsider might be 'How can we justify being part of a regime that we've both described as quite anachronistic?'

### **Allan:**

Absolutely. And it's a question that's often asked of me, as being still working within a professional capacity with people with learning disabilities. And my response to that was, that despite the perceived perversity of that, that was what was expected from society. So society had a view that that was okay. Now, it was only gradually that society changed, and moved to a more enlightened view of how life should be for vulnerable people, including people with learning disabilities. And I would argue that there are still groups within society that would say 'out of sight, out of mind'. 'We don't want these people living in our communities', and so on and so forth. So even now, in 2007, I don't think we would say that we have a fully inclusive society, that would embrace people with learning disabilities. Or indeed people with mental health problems et al with open arms. And I think if you believe that's the case, then you're not looking clearly.

### **Howard:**

It's a difficult one to convey to people, I think how fun it was to work there, then.

### **Allan:**

I certainly think that it shaped my thinking as to how I believed that people with learning disabilities should be supported, and that that was not within a hospital environment. And that led me down my career pathway as it is. I also think that it is still an incredibly potent and useful experience to have, in supporting people with learning disabilities within the community. We still support a very large number of people who spent a huge amount of time within long stay hospital environments. And that's going to be the case probably for the next twenty or thirty years. And I think if you don't understand the experience, you don't understand the exposure that that person may have had to an institution environment, you will not never really understand them as individuals. So I find that the experience has been incredibly useful. Even now in my practice, as being able to reflect and genuine empathise with it. I think if you read books, and by all means research, you will never know what it was like, because you were never there. And that's the legacy that leaves me.