



Mental Health: Lennox Castle

Reflecting on A Regime

Howard:

So how much do you think that impetus for change came internally?

Allan:

I think it was probably not.. I would go as far to say that a lot of change was probably resisted. And it was resisted because it was seen as more work.

Howard:

Do you not think that there's a generational thing, in the seventies, that there were younger, more forward thinking people coming in, that wanted to try and..

Allan:

I think so. But I mean, I think you're doing that in a juxtaposition of a very rigid, and almost quasi-military regime, in terms of it's strength. As you said it was a very strong institutional structure. So it takes an awful lot to break that down. And I think it was incremental. I don't think it was one particular event. I think yes, of course, people were coming in, they were more enlightened. I guess the sixties and seventies were the more, people were becoming more enlightened, generically anyway. But, that there was no one particular thing that says okay this institution has got to change. And I think there were many people that never believed an institution like Lennox Castle would ever close. And I know many people said that Lennox Castle will always be here. Because it's the only place that people like this, can be cared for, is within a hospital setting. Now we know that that's been proved to be not the case. I don't think it was malicious. I think people genuinely believed that that was the case. But I do think the people coming back, maybe being a bit more enlightened. Folk recognising that people with learning disabilities had rights the same as anybody else. The advent of the concept of normalisation. I think they all led us down a road which said, no this is something that cannot continue. And we have to seek some ways of, and some way of changing it. Although people didn't think by changing, they meant dismantling it. They thought by changing it would be lets make the wards a wee bit nicer. Let's reduce the occupancy levels. Let's give people, maybe not private bedrooms, but at least cubicles that they can call their own. That was seen as big stuff. We know that the change was much more, and in the end was much more radical. But that was thought to be cutting edge, was to give people the privilege of some privacy.