



***Integration,
Investment, and
Impact:***

**Rethinking Mental Health
and Social Care**



House of Lords Roundtable Report

Autumn 2025



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Foreword

It was a privilege to chair the *Mental Health and Social Care Roundtable: Partnership, Innovation and Progress*, held in the House of Lords. The meeting gave attendees the opportunity to reflect on how far we've come, and how far we still need to go in ensuring mental health is treated with the same seriousness and investment as physical health.

This report captures the key themes, challenges, and opportunities raised during a memorable evening of open, honest, and constructive discussion. Our aim was simple: to bring together leaders from across the public, independent, and voluntary sectors to explore how we can collectively strengthen mental health and social care provision through more effective partnership, innovation, and practical reform.

I am proud to have supported the event in my capacity as Chair of the Advisory Board at Cygnet Group, the UK's largest independent provider of inpatient mental health and social care services. With over 13,000 staff supporting thousands of patients across more than 150 services nationwide, we are acutely aware of both the responsibilities we carry and the opportunities we must contribute positively to a more joined-up, compassionate, and effective mental health system.

This is not without its challenges. As we heard during the evening, many services across the system – whether NHS or independent – are under pressure, and not all are delivering to the standard the public rightly expects. But there are also examples of excellence, investment, and improvement. At Cygnet, we have opened seven new hospitals in the past eighteen months, created over 1,000 new jobs and maintained low agency usage and high Care Quality Commission ratings across the majority of our services. We do this not as a shareholder-driven organisation, but as an organisation rooted in long-term commitment, clinical governance, and a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve.

Our discussions during the roundtable were wide-ranging: from the new NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England and its emphasis on prevention, digital tools, and community-based care to the Mental Health Bill and its implications for rights, responsibilities, and system reform. We also reflected on long-standing inequalities – such as the continued overrepresentation of Black people in detentions under the Mental Health Act (MHA) – and the need for cultural as well as structural change.

As someone who chaired the Mental Health Act Commission in the late 1990s, I have seen how ambition can drift when not backed by implementation. We detain more people now than we did 25 years ago, and we have seen a drastic reduction in inpatient beds without always putting sufficient support in the community. **We must avoid false choices: we need both high-quality hospital provision and effective community care. It should never be a case of one or the other.**

Too many mental health facilities – particularly within the NHS estate – are in a state of disrepair. I have seen firsthand the unacceptable conditions in which some people are expected to recover. That is not the legacy Attlee would have hoped for. But we have an opportunity to do better.

My thanks go to all those who contributed to the evening, particularly our host, Lord Sahota, and speakers, Professor Sir Simon Wessely, Dr Lade Smith, Sojan Joseph MP, Professor Baroness Watkins, and Baroness Bottomley. Special thanks also to our partners at Curia for helping bring this diverse group together, for this independent report, and for their continued commitment to turning policy into practice. My hope is that this report will help inform not only ongoing parliamentary debate, but real, on-the-ground change. If we are to build a system that supports the whole person – body and mind – it will depend on our willingness to collaborate, to challenge and to act.

Professor Lord Patel of Bradford OBE
Senior Independent Board Director, Cygnet



From Our Host

It was my honour to host the *Mental Health and Social Care Roundtable: Partnership, Innovation and Progress* in the House of Lords. As a Labour peer, my route to Parliament was shaped by over two decades in local government, including several years as Leader of Telford & Wrekin Council. That experience has profoundly influenced my understanding of the critical role mental health plays in almost every aspect of community life.

I do not claim to be an expert in mental health policy. Much of what I have come to understand – and what continues to shape my questions – has come through conversations with colleagues such as Lord Patel, whose commitment to this area is widely recognised. However, I do bring the perspective of a local authority leader who witnessed, time and again, how mental health lies at the heart of so many of the challenges councils face: housing, employment, community safety, education, and, of course, social care.

Behind these issues are people – individuals and families – grappling with mental ill health, often without adequate support. Local government, for all its commitment, has too often lacked the resources, expertise, or capacity to respond as fully or compassionately as needed.

This roundtable brought together a wide range of stakeholders – policy leaders, practitioners, and advocates – to reflect on how we can work in closer partnership to build a more integrated and effective mental health and social care system. For those of us with local government backgrounds, it was an opportunity to listen and to contribute real-world insights from the front lines. But more than that, it was a chance to consider how councils and communities can be empowered to play a more central role in prevention, integration, and long-term transformation.

Thank you to all who took part in the discussion. Your contributions are helping shape a future in which mental health is no longer treated as a peripheral issue but recognised as a core component of public service and human wellbeing.

Lord Sahota
House of Lords

