

Ten carers arrested after Panorama exposé

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Ten carers at a psychiatric hospital have been arrested after a documentary broadcast footage of vulnerable adults apparently being mistreated.

Durham constabulary said that seven men and three women had been detained yesterday in connection with alleged abuse at Whorlton Hall, a private hospital for adults with learning disabilities. Uniformed officers and investigators from the force's major crime team made the arrests at addresses in Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Darlington and Stockton. They were all members of staff at Whorlton Hall and

were being questioned about offences relating to abuse and neglect.

The arrests were made two days after the BBC's *Panorama* programme showed footage taken by an undercover reporter that appeared to show staff intimidating, mocking and restraining vulnerable patients.

Some staff used offensive language to refer to patients and boasted of physically manhandling them. Two male carers appeared to intimidate a woman patient, who was known to be distressed by proximity to men, saying that unless she kept quiet they would summon more men to her room.

Whorlton Hall has since been closed

and about a dozen patients have been moved to other hospitals. Cygnet, a private company that took over the running of the hospital in January, suspended 16 members of staff when the footage was broadcast.

The Care Quality Commission, which inspects hospitals, has admitted that it missed what was happening at Whorlton Hall when its inspectors visited in March last year in response to an alert by a whistleblower.

Concerns about long shifts and poor training and supervision were raised, but nothing more serious. The hospital was given a "good" rating in 2017, the second highest of four categories.



Footage appeared to capture abuse

According to a source in the care sector, in the past year there had been seven visits to Whorlton Hall by the CQC, 11 safeguarding visits, 75 from local authorities and 60 from independent

advocates, with 144 visitors from parts of the NHS.

Cygnet said it was supporting the investigation. Durham constabulary added: "The investigation is at an early stage and is expected to take some time to complete."

The closure of inpatient psychiatric hospitals for vulnerable adults was recommended by a review after a 2011 *Panorama* exposé of Winterbourne View in Gloucestershire. Matt Hancock, the health and social care secretary, said this week that he would ask experts to develop a new model of care for people with autism, learning disabilities and mental illnesses.