

Peter Hindley

Warm, energetic, positive



PETER HINDLEY, 58, is a consultant in child and adolescent psychiatry at St Thomas' Hospital in London, where he is director of training in his specialty for south London. He also chairs the child and adolescent faculty at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, where he has led efforts to improve services for a group whose needs are not well met. He has called for reinstatement of the child and adolescent psychiatric morbidity survey, last carried out in 2004, and has led new guidelines on referrals and care, warning that the Health and Social Care Act has led to fragmentation and significant cuts in funding.

What is your pet hate? "People who put their dog's shit in little black bags and then leave them on the side of the pavement"

What was your earliest ambition?

To be a jockey. I'm not very tall, and it seemed to be my only career option.

Who has been your biggest inspiration?

Personally, my father, Chris Hindley, for his energy and determination, and my parents in law: Tom Pilkington, who died a timely and dignified death but is an enduring influence, and Pam Pilkington—at 93 she is still a source of wise advice, inspiration, and, most importantly, delight. Professionally, Alan McClelland, a brilliant clinician and inspirational trainer who, sadly, died too young.

What was the worst mistake in your career?

I can honestly say that I don't regret any of my career moves. But my most difficult experience, in an inpatient unit for children with learning difficulties, taught me how not to run a service, which was an invaluable lesson.

What was your best career move?

Becoming a child and adolescent psychiatrist. It's the best job in the world.

Bevan or Lansley? Who has been the best and the worst health secretary in your lifetime?

Lansley was the worst, for unleashing five years of chaos that we're only now starting to recover from. Alan Johnson was the best, for bringing a calm and sensible presence to the job.

Who is the person you would most like to thank and why?

My wife, Anna Pilkington: her determination, energy, honesty, attention to detail, and gentle wackiness are awe inspiring. We call her the love dictator: that says it all!

To whom would you most like to apologise?

Everyone to whom I've said, "Yes, let's do that," and then not followed it through. I suspect that they are legion.

If you were given £1m what would you spend it on?

Preventing global warming—but how, I know not.

Where are or were you happiest?

In Wales with Anna and our children, Esther, Guy, and Seth.

What single unheralded change has made the most difference in your field in your lifetime?

The advent of the internet. It has changed everything.

Do you support doctor assisted suicide?

Yes, when people with life limiting illnesses are physically unable to take their own lives.

What book should every doctor read?

If This is a Man by Primo Levi. It describes the extremes of man's humanity and inhumanity, something all doctors should understand.

What poem, song, or passage of prose would you like mourners at your funeral to hear?

Lights Out by Edward Thomas: it speaks to all of the uncertainties and vicissitudes of life, when we somehow have to carry on stumbling forward until we sleep.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

Singing rude songs about the opposition at Highbury, embarrassing my two sons.

If you could be invisible for a day what would you do?

Sit in Anna's surgery and watch her work. I think that I'd learn a thing or two.

Clarkson or Clark? Would you rather watch *Top Gear* or *Civilisation*? What television programmes do you like?

Clark. I don't watch much TV, but I've really enjoyed *Wolf Hall*.

What is your most treasured possession?

Our piano.

What, if anything, are you doing to reduce your carbon footprint?

I cycle, use the train wherever I can, and try to make our leaky Victorian house energy efficient.

What personal ambition do you still have?

To play the piano as well as I can. I started three years ago, and my hands and brain are a bit stiff, but I'm improving.

Summarise your personality in three words

Warm, energetic, positive.

Where does alcohol fit into your life?

Neatly: wine and good beer are great pleasures. My body doesn't respond well to spirits.

What is your pet hate?

People who put their dog's shit in little black bags and then leave them on the side of the pavement.

What would be on the menu for your last supper?

Ceviche (with sustainable fish); slow roast shoulder of pork rubbed with chilli and garlic and served with roast carrots and goat's cheese, mashed potato, and celeriac; blood orange and watercress salad; and tarte Tatin.

Do you have any regrets about becoming a doctor?

None whatsoever.

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