



Department of Health & Social Care

*From Helen Whately MP
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Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP
Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights

16 May 2020

Re: Data on impact of COVID-19 on people with Learning Disabilities and Autism

Thank you for your letter of 7 May in which you requested data on the number of autistic people and/or people with a learning disability who have contracted and died from Covid-19.

We recognise that Covid-19 poses specific challenges for people with a learning disability, autistic people and their families and carers. We are working hard across government, the NHS, social care and with delivery partners to ensure that we mitigate these challenges as much as possible and to ensure the safety of people with a learning disability and autistic people, including in inpatient mental health settings.

Nonetheless, it is a sad truth that some people with a learning disability and some autistic people have lost their lives as a result of Covid-19. I express my condolences to each and every family that has been affected by the pandemic.

It is absolutely right that we are transparent about the impacts of Covid-19 on people with a learning disability and autistic people. The Department of Health and Social Care has been working closely with Arms Length Bodies to determine how we do this in the most accurate and timely way.

On Thursday 14 May, NHS England (NHSE) released for the first time data collected on the number of people with a learning disability or autism who have sadly died in acute settings as a result of Covid-19. This data is available here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-daily-deaths/>

You also requested information as to how many people who are autistic and/or have learning disabilities in mental health inpatient units have i) contracted and ii) died from Covid-19. This data is currently being quality assured by NHSE. The information will be ready in time for the evidence session on Monday 18th. NHSE have also committed that they will shortly publish additional data showing deaths of people with learning disability or autism which have been reported through the Learning Disabilities Mortality Review Programme (LeDeR).

I am clear this represents the first step in greater transparency on this issue, and the Department of Health and Social Care will continue to work with Arms Length Bodies to refine and develop the data that we will publish on an ongoing basis. I would also like to reassure the Committee that we will use this data to inform our understanding of the impacts of Covid-19 for people with learning disabilities and autism during these immediate, unprecedented times and as part of our longer term planning for recovery.

HELEN WHATELY