Chris Coghlan MP
Member of Parliament for Dorking and Horley
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

By email

18 September 2026

Re: NC135 to the Health Bill

Dear Secretary,

Last week, I did not have the opportunity to speak to New Clause 135, an amendment I tabled to the Health Bill. In principle it would put fundamental aspects of the Learning from Lives and Deaths of people with a learning disability and autistic people (LeDeR) programme on a statutory footing. There is a risk of losing sufficiently complete and representative national data as a consequence of the abolition of NHS England.

Earlier this year, I spoke in the House about the brutal reality facing autistic young people and those with learning disabilities. I raised the story of Christopher Laskaris, a young autistic man without a learning disability who lived alone in Leeds. Despite his mother, Fiona, raising credible doubts about his capacity on numerous occasions over eight years, she was never able to secure the mental capacity assessment that she needed to protect him. Horrifically, Christopher was exploited and murdered in his home aged 24 by a man who had just been released from jail. Failures to apply the Mental Capacity Act correctly continue to be identified in deaths reviewed by LeDeR. In 2023 alone, LeDeR recorded 160 deaths in which the Act was not correctly followed.

The disparity in life expectancy between autistic and/or learning-disabled adults and the general population has been discussed in Parliament since at least 2013. In 2018, Baroness Hollins stated "The average age of death in this country is **20 years earlier** when compared with the non-learning-disabled population. Significantly, we know that most of these deaths are unexpected, avoidable and preventable." Eight years later, the national LeDeR figures show that people with a learning disability still die roughly **19 years earlier** than the general population and suffer nearly twice the rate of avoidable deaths. This lack of progress over so many years indicates a need for greater scrutiny and accountability.

In July, the Government announced a transition away from the national annual LeDeR report toward an unspecified dataset. The Government has historically reported annually on the national annual LeDeR report, yet no information has been given as to if the same level of scrutiny will apply to this dataset. Without publicly reported national scrutiny, we risk losing sight of whether these inequalities are reducing and whether lessons are being acted on consistently across the country.

We also do not know if the new dataset will have enough information, of a high enough quality and completeness, to identify trends in preventable deaths. Freedom of Information requests have found that ICBs are already delaying completing individual LeDeR reviews.

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The 2024-2025 Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire LeDeR report found no reviews were completed during the reporting period despite 68 notifications being received. Their 2023/24 report said LeDeR reviews had been "on hold since February 2024". Similar issues have also been reported in other parts of the country.

I request that you:

- Clarify how the ICB duty to undertake LeDeR reviews and submit data will be mandated and enforced, including expected annual review volumes.
- Set out the standardised content of reviews and the data that will be recorded nationally.
- Explain how the completeness, quality and representativeness of the data will be assured nationally.
- Explain what national progress reporting will be made publicly available, including what will be reported to Parliament and how frequently.
- Explain how the Government will use the dataset to identify recurring failings linked to preventable deaths, determine remedial action and ensure delivery.

LeDeR was established to give us transparency, learn from deaths and reduce premature mortality. We cannot allow local systems to quietly pause reviews or shelve safety plans while autistic people and people with learning disabilities pay for these failures with their lives.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Coghlan

Chris Coghlan

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