Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

The allegations in the draft report about Southern Health are deeply disturbing, and I welcome the steps that the Secretary of State has announced. In particular, I am pleased that he will not treat this as an isolated incident. The key findings of the draft report show that in nearly two thirds of the investigations, there was no family involvement. Will he immediately send the message out to all trusts that it is vital to involve family members, particularly when we are talking about those who cannot speak for themselves?

Jeremy Hunt The Secretary of State for Health

I will do that, and I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me the opportunity to do so. We see this situation all too often. There was a story in the Sunday newspapers about a family being shut out of a very important decision about the unexpected death of a baby. It is incredibly important to involve families, even more so in the case of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities. The family may be the best possible advocates for someone’s needs.

We need to change the assumption that things will become more difficult if we involve families. More often than not, something like litigation will melt away if the family is involved properly from the outset of a problem. It is when families feel that the door is being slammed in their face that they think they have to resort to the courts, which is in no one’s interests.

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