Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

The report into Southern Health makes disturbing reading, but we will never tackle unacceptable levels of health inequality and early deaths among those who live with learning disability and mental health issues unless we address safety and risk. Will the Minister go further on the mortality review and set out how we can see where differences exist around the country? Will he reassure the House that duty of candour will in future be more than a tick in the box?

Alistair Burt The Minister of State, Department of Health

A tick in the box for duty of candour, which the report mentioned, was unacceptable—it must mean much more than that. The learning disability mortality review programme is important and will support local areas to review the deaths of people with learning disabilities, and use that information to help improve services. In time, it will also show at a national level whether things are improving for people with learning disabilities, and whether fewer people are dying from preventable causes. That review is already under way in a pilot in the north-east in Cumbria, which will help to inform us how the programme operates as it is rolled out. Plans are in place to roll out that review across all regions of England between now and 2018, with pilots commencing in other parts of the country between 2016 and 2017. That work has never been done before, and it is right that we are doing it now.

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