



Craig Whittaker MP

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Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Bill

Thank you for contacting me about the use of force in mental health units, and Steve Reed's Private Member's Bill.

Occasioned by the death of Olaseni Lewis, one of Mr Reed's constituents, in a mental health unit in 2010, this Bill requires mental health units to record all use of force, develop written policies about the use of force, commit to reducing the use of force in all instances, record its use when it occurs, and provide patients with clear information about their rights. Furthermore, any death which occurs at the time force is used must be reported to the Secretary of State, and independently reviewed.

You will be pleased to know this Bill is being supported by the Government. Health Minister, Jackie Doyle-Price, acknowledged that for too long the use of force has been seen as the norm in health and mental health institutions, and that this Bill will be instrumental in changing this culture. I will follow its progress closely through Parliament.

Also, in October 2017, the Prime Minister announced that the Government would embark on a comprehensive review of the Mental Health Act, which has remained unchanged since the 1980s. The review will be led by Professor Sir Simon Wessely, former president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and he will consider the needs of all users of mental health services and their families, and improve the system's support for those during a mental health crisis, with a particular focus on reducing the use of force under the Act, and ending the disproportionate rates of detention of ethnic minority patients.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP