



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Maria Caulfield MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Health and Social Care*

*39 Victoria Street
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Ms Lorraine Harris,
HM Area Coroner for
the City of Kingston upon Hull
and County of the East Riding of
Yorkshire
The Guildhall
Alfred Gelder Street
Kingston upon Hull
HU1 2AA

10th February 2023

Dear Ms Harris,

Thank you for your letter of 27 June 2022 to the then Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Sajid Javid, about the death of Jessica Laverack. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for Mental Health and thank you for the additional time allowed.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Ms Laverack's death and I offer my sincere condolences to their family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are very concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

The Department recognises the links between domestic abuse and suicide. We are working closely with the Home Office on the implementation of its Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan. We will also continue to work closely with a range of partners across the suicide prevention sector to consider factors linked to suicide and actions that should be taken to address them as part of the recently announced national suicide prevention strategy. We expect this renewed strategy will include measures to tackle domestic abuse. Additionally, as near real time suspected suicide surveillance systems develop at a local and national level, the feasibility of improving data collection in relation to domestic abuse will be explored.

Turning to your concerns around the need for better information sharing on the risks of sleep deprivation and its impact on mental health and suicide. It is difficult for the Department to comment on information sharing around this without knowing the specifics of Ms Laverack's case. However, we recognise the link between poor sleep and mental health. Better Health-Every Mind Matters is a campaign and digital resource delivered by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to help people address common sub-clinical mental health problems, including sleep difficulties. It provides NHS-approved digital resources to help people get to sleep and to sleep better. If poor sleep is affecting an individual's daily life or causing them distress, they are advised to call NHS 111 or talk to their GP.

With regard to your concerns around the general lack of information sharing between agencies, healthcare professionals must believe there is a significant public interest and satisfy data protection law, and the 'Common Law Duty of confidentiality' when sharing any confidential patient information. This requires requestors to meet specific purposes on a case-by-case basis to ensure the confidentiality of this data is maintained.

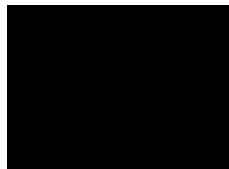
We know there is continued scope for better collaboration as we know there are times when access to health data can deliver better outcomes. We continue to work to improve appropriate data linkage to support the public's health and wellbeing, making sure that any improvements in data access are appropriate, safe and legal, and transparent, to maintain public trust in how their data is used.

The Health and Care Act 2022, which came into force on 1 July 2022, has enabled the establishment of integrated care boards and integrated care partnerships, providing an opportunity for greater understanding of local health needs of victims of abuse. Integrated care boards are required to set out how they will address the needs of victims of abuse in their joint forward plans. NHS England is developing guidance to assist integrated care boards, which will include promotion of effective pathways between community based domestic abuse and mental health support services as well as highlighting the partnership approach required between health, local authorities, criminal justice partners and the voluntary sector to ensure services are effective.

The Department is also working with the Office for National Statistics to explore how insights from health data can improve our understanding of violence against women and girls, including domestic and sexual violence. The recently published Women's Health Strategy includes a public commitment to this project. The new information generated will be used to improve services and experience of service for women and girls and inform interventions around violence against women and girls.

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Kind regards,



MARIA CAULFIELD