



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

*The Rt Hon Dame Andrea Leadsom DBE MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health, Start for Life and Primary Care*

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23 May 2023

Dear Mr Heath,

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 March 2023 about the death of Benjamin Nelson-Roux. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) at the Department of Health and Social Care. Please accept my sincere apologies for the significant delay in responding to this matter.

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

The provision of inpatient or residential substance misuse interventions for young people away from home is only appropriate in a few, complex case and there is limited demand for residential rehabilitation – which provides an adult-oriented addiction model – for children and young people.

There is some evidence that young people's residential interventions can be effective, but not more so than community-based ones, meaning that a residential model is not seen as best practice for most cases. This is primarily because substance misuse among children and young people often compounds other problems and so coordinated, well-led interventions are required which mobilise a variety of resources from local communities including safeguarding, education, training, mental health and resilience building.

The young people commissioning support: principles and indicators guidance can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-drugs-and-tobacco-commissioning-support-pack/young-people-substance-misuse-commissioning-support-2019-to-2020-principles-and-indicators](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-drugs-and-tobacco-commissioning-support-pack/young-people-substance-misuse-commissioning-support-2019-to-2020-principles-and-indicators). This framework of support cannot be provided by specific drug and alcohol rehabilitation services alone. Instead collaborative teamwork is needed across local health, social care, family services and education to address the full range of identified needs in a young person, along with any drug and alcohol treatment interventions needed.

Where inpatient or residential support is assessed as required for young people with complex needs, local partners should come together to plan the most suitable arrangement. This may involve the young person being accommodated in temporary fostering arrangements or a child and adolescent mental health inpatient unit with support provided from the local young people's specialist substance misuse service.

We would expect local areas to have protocols in place to respond to these complex needs when they do arise. These should recognise the importance of supporting young people with a substance misuse need in a holistic, child-focused way that is led by local Children's Services.

The government recognises that there is a need to improve specialist community drug and alcohol services for children and young people. We hope that the £532million of supplemental funding that we are investing in the delivery of the drug strategy will allow local authorities to meet the needs of residents that have substance misuse needs – including children and young people.

Additional drug and alcohol treatment funding allocations for 2024 to 2025 can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extra-funding-for-drug-and-alcohol-treatment-2024-to-2025>. In order to draw down the funding, local authorities are required to develop a plan against a menu of interventions which includes increasing the capacity for treating children and young people, investing in outreach to engage those who aren't in treatment, and improving the quality of treatment and recovery services. Since the start of the drug strategy in March 2022 local authority drug and alcohol treatment and recovery systems have seen the number of children and young people benefiting from treatment in the community rise by 2,930, a 27% increase. But as this case highlights there is more to do on this important area.

I hope this reply is helpful and thank you for bringing these important concerns to my attention.

Best wishes,



**THE RT HON DAME ANDREA LEADSOM DBE MP**