






Department
of Health &
Social Care


*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Public Health and Prevention*

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Our ref: 

HM Coroner Lydia Brown
West London Coroner Service
25 Bagleys Lane
Fulham, London
SW6 2QA

By email: 

6 March 2024

Dear Ms Brown,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 12 December 2024 sent to Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) about the death of James Robert Michael Alderman (known as Jimmy). I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for public health and prevention, including infant feeding.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Jimmy's death and I offer my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones.

Your report sets out several 'matters of concern' following your investigation. While the majority of these are outside the scope of my department, my officials have been working closely with colleagues in NHS England and the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) within the Department for Business and Trade to ensure all of the concerns are being adequately addressed. Each organisation will respond to you separately.

The element of the report that is relevant to my department is the concern that there is a lack of accessible information for parents and carers in the public domain about the use of baby carriers to support 'hands-free' breastfeeding.

'Hands-free breastfeeding' is not terminology we endorse. Whenever and wherever a baby is breastfed, they will need to be well supported, usually by the mother's arms, hands or body in order that the baby can feed effectively. How this is achieved will depend on the age and development of the baby, the physical characteristics of individual mothers and babies and the relationship between the two. Whilst not an exhaustive list, some breastfeeding positions are shown in this [guidance from Better Health Start for Life](#).

Baby wearing or the use of baby slings may facilitate breastfeeding by helping mother and baby to stay close together. It is the responsibility of baby sling manufacturers to provide clear guidance on the use of their product, including suitability of the product to support breastfeeding and how this can be safely achieved.

Information on a range of topics to support parents is available through the government's [Better Health - Start for Life](#) communication programme, which provides trusted NHS advice and support tailored to users' stage of pregnancy or baby's age.

Better Health – Start for Life already includes information about the safe use of baby carriers on its website and in personalised e-mails to parents. In response to your concerns, we are reviewing the information to ensure it is sufficiently prominent. We are also considering ways to supplement the content and engaging with key stakeholders, such as UNICEF UK, to make sure we get the messaging right about the use of baby carriers and breastfeeding. We will also work with NHS England to ensure there is consistent guidance on the use of slings and breastfeeding.

The Better Health – Start for Life website includes a wealth of information about breastfeeding, including guidance on positioning for effective breastfeeding and good latch. While the content does not talk specifically about the use of baby carriers during breastfeeding, it does include information on the importance of ensuring the baby's nose is clear (not obstructed), and the mother observing the baby for signs of effective feeding as well as the baby's general wellbeing.

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

Yours sincerely,

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**PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND
PREVENTION**