

Dear Mr Davies and Professor Hatton,

Thank you for your letter regarding our 1 December session, part of which focused on the impact of coronavirus on people with learning disabilities.

I am sorry for the frustration that the absence of a live witness with learning disabilities has caused you and I want to reassure you that the principle of hearing from experts with lived experience, in various ways, remains important to me – and indeed is a priority for Select Committees as a whole.

When we do invite people with lived experience to give evidence to Select Committees we of course want to make them feel as comfortable as possible and to make sure that their evidence is given the time it deserves. Unfortunately on this occasion, because only a short amount of time was available for the panel, we did not feel that we could guarantee this and therefore felt that other ways of gathering evidence from people with learning disabilities would be more appropriate. I note that an offer was made to facilitate a one to one interview with Mr Davies, which would have been given equal weight as oral evidence: if this would still be of interest then we would be very glad to facilitate it.

Nonetheless I agree with you that hearing directly about the experiences of people with learning disabilities is important. The clip of Ann McCallum was included so that this could still be achieved even if we couldn't guarantee enough time for a live witness. I am pleased to say that the clip is included in the recording of the session and can be viewed at around 9.50. While this hasn't been recorded in the Hansard transcript it has nonetheless been submitted as evidence to the Committees and will be considered when the Committees draft their report.

Thank you for your feedback on the Committee's work, which we will keep in mind going forward.

Best wishes,

Jeremy Hunt

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP

Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

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