

*From the Office of Anne Williams CBE  
National Director for Learning Disabilities*

**TO:**  
All Chief Executives of Local Authorities in  
England  
**CC:**  
All Chairs of NHS organisations in England  
All Chief Executives in NHS Trusts in England  
All Chief Executives in NHS Foundation Trusts in  
England  
All Chief Executives in Primary Care Trusts in  
England  
All Chief Executives in Strategic Health  
Authorities in England  
All Chief Executives of Independent Providers  
Monitor  
Care Quality Commission  
Local Government Association

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14 October 2010

Dear colleague,

### **Publication of 'Six Lives' progress report**

In March 2009 the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and Local Government Ombudsman published 'Six Lives: The provision of public services to people with learning disabilities', an investigation into the deaths of six people with learning disabilities who were in the care of the NHS and social care services. Their report contained serious criticism of the way public services responded to the needs of people with learning disabilities:

*'The investigation reports...show the devastating impact of organisation behaviour which does not adapt to individual needs, or even consistently follow procedures designed to maintain a basic quality of service for everyone. They identify a lack of leadership and a failure to understand the law in relation to disability discrimination and human rights. This led to situations in which people with learning disabilities were treated less favourably than others, resulting in prolonged suffering and inappropriate care' ('Six Lives')*

'Six Lives' included a series of recommendations, one of which was for the Department of Health to support implementation and publish a progress report outlining what had been done. This progress report was published today. I would like to thank colleagues whose support in sharing information enabled us to assess

where we are, particularly the Regional Reports generated from Learning Disability Partnership Board Annual Reports. You can read the full report on the DH website at [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_120251](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_120251)

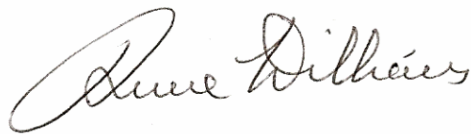
This report recognises that much work has been done in some organisations to improve the support people with learning disabilities in receiving health care and treatment, and progress has been made, but good work is not embedded everywhere and serious concerns remain. These concerns particularly centre on how far the law is being followed in terms of:

- making 'reasonable adjustments' in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and now Equality Act 2010
- assessing capacity, gaining consent and best interest decision making in line with the Mental Capacity Act 2006

I would like to ask local authorities to assure themselves that the services they commission are following the law in these areas, for all those in their care. I would also ask them to consider how to maintain progress in improving the health care and outcomes of people with learning disabilities, working in partnership across health and social care.

I will also be writing to Learning Disability Partnership Boards to encourage them to continue their scrutiny of local progress in these areas.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Williams', written in a cursive style.

Anne Williams CBE  
National Director for Learning Disabilities