



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**MPs DEMAND A STATUTORY DUTY OF CANDOUR IN HEALTHCARE  
“ROBBIE’S LAW”**

MPs from all three main political parties today called upon the Government to introduce a statutory ‘duty of candour’ for organisations in healthcare in an adjournment debate at Westminster. Robert Syms MP (Conservative) who secured the debate, Tom Brake MP and John Pugh MP (Liberal Democrat) and Liz Kendall MP (Labour shadow health minister) all spoke strongly in support of a clear and enforceable statutory duty to be open and honest with patients or relatives about mistakes which cause harm. No MPs spoke against a statutory duty of candour. The Government was accused of hesitating unnecessarily about clarifying that the new ‘requirement’ promised in the coalition programme for government and in the recent NHS White Paper would indeed be a meaningful statutory duty rather than just more guidance. Responding, health minister Ann Milton MP admitted that the Government will still be undecided about whether to introduce a clear statutory duty or other options such as publishing new guidance or building a requirement into health providers’ contracts. A decision is due to be made over the next few weeks and the new ‘requirement’ or ‘duty’ to be in place by 2012.

Peter Walsh, chief executive of the patient safety charity Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA) said:

“Today’s debate is further confirmation that the introduction of a clear, specific and enforceable statutory duty to be open and honest with patients when things go wrong in healthcare is the only acceptable option. It is no more than any patient or the public should be able to expect. We have already had guidance up to our ears and it has not changed the culture. Anything less than a clear statutory duty will be seen as a climb down and pandering to those who wish to keep the status quo and are prepared to tolerate cover ups and denial.”

AvMA has been leading the campaign for a statutory Duty of Candour which is also known as “Robbie’s law” in honour of Robbie Powell. His case and the struggle of his family to seek justice, truth and accountability are a powerful symbol of the need for such a duty. Robbie’s father Will Powell travelled from South Wales to be present at the debate and MPs paid tribute to the family’s ongoing struggle. The campaign also enjoys widespread support from patients organisations, including National Voices (the umbrella group for over 200 patients charities) and the National Association of LINKs Members, as well as leading doctors and other stakeholders.

**ENDS**