



Department
of Health

From Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP
Minister of State for Community and Social Care

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Mr A. Walker
North London Coroners Court
29 Wood Street
Barnet
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20 MAY 2015

Dear Mr Walker,

Thank you for your letter of 12 March 2015 following the inquest into the death of Ronald Gittens. I was very sorry to hear of Mr Gittens' death and wish to extend my sympathy and sincere condolences to his family.

You raise two matters of concern:

- The transfer of acute psychiatric patients when no bed is available and;
- The use of a Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team (CRHTT) as “a filter to prevent patients in need of a bed from having access to a bed”.

You have also sent your report to the Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust. The concerns you raise are properly matters for the local Trust and I would expect them to respond appropriately to you. We give Trusts the freedom and discretion to arrange these matters in ways that best meet the needs of patients. However we insist that all patients receive timely, high-quality care. Where that does not happen, as in this case, Trusts must take action to put things right.

I appreciate that the issue of inter-trust transfers of at-risk psychiatric patients is indeed one relevant to all Mental Health NHS Trusts. However, the responsibility for decision making in this area resides with the local NHS rather than the Department of Health.

The Department of Health is committed to improving the care and support of people in mental health crisis. In February 2014, we launched the Crisis Care Concordat. The Concordat is a national commitment, agreed between all services and agencies that come into contact with people in crisis. It sets out how they will work together

and be involved in the care and support of people in crisis, and how they ensure that these people get the support they need, when they need it.

A key ambition of the Concordat is for every local area to agree and deliver its own Mental Health Crisis Action Plan to improve crisis care in that area. Every locality in England now has such a plan in place. These plans include proposals for reviewing the provision of home treatment teams, hospital places of safety (so that people in mental health crisis are not detained in police cells), and round the clock telephone helplines for people in crisis.

NHS England is one of the signatories to the Concordat to improve the system of care and support for people in crisis. Their work includes identifying the causes of crises, and putting prevention and early intervention plans in place whenever possible.

I am grateful to you for bringing the circumstances of Mr Gittens' death to my attention and I hope that you find this reply helpful.

Yours sincerely



ALISTAIR BURT

