



Department  
of Health

*From the Lord Prior of Brampton  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for NHS Productivity (Lords)*

Mr J.S Pollard  
Senior Coroner  
Coroner's Court  
1 Mount Tabor Street  
Stockport  
SK1 3AG

*Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS*

*Tel: 020 7210 4850*

**13 JUL 2016**

Thank you for your letter of 19 May 2016, following the inquest into the death of Christopher Fields. I was sorry to hear of Mr Field's death and wish to extend my condolences to his family.

I am aware that the North West Ambulance Service has already responded to your concerns and I have seen a copy of the reply. However, you are also concerned that the call to the ambulance service did not generate a red code response time (between 8 and 19 minutes) when the patient was critically injured. You consider that this was because the algorithms used by the call handlers for coding calls are neither accurate nor fit for purpose and if not remedied, could lead to future deaths. You ask that the Department of Health responds to this concern.

NWAS has confirmed that the emergency call concerning Mr Fields was correctly coded as a Green 2 based on the priority symptoms reported, which at the time of the call were not critical. The critical injuries to which you refer were sustained following a second assault some two hours after the first.

Had critical injuries been reported during the first emergency call, different algorithm questions would have been asked by the call handler and the call would have been coded with a higher response category.

NWAS use the Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS) for handling 999 emergency calls. This system determines the priority in which vehicles should be dispatched based upon the immediacy of the life threatening symptoms displayed by the patient, as reported by the caller. The call handler then assigns a code for the call which maps to one of the following response categories below:

**Category A calls (life threatening):**

*Red 1 - 8 minutes: Respond to 75% of Red 1 calls within 8 minutes with a suitably trained and equipped response. This could be an ambulance, a Rapid Response Vehicle or a community responder .*

*Red 2 - 8 minutes: Respond to 75% of Red 2 calls within 8 minutes with a suitably trained and equipped response. This could be an ambulance, a Rapid Response Vehicle or a community responder .*

*A19: Respond to 95% of Category A (red 1 & 2 combined) calls within 19 minutes with a vehicle capable of carrying a patient.*

**Green calls (serious but non- life threatening):**

*Green 1 and 2 -- face to face ambulance response within 20 minutes (95% of the time).*

**Green calls (non-life threatening/non-emergency):**

*Green 3 - Telephone assessment within 60 minutes (100% of the time) - alternative pathway referral, upgrade to Red/Green 1 or 2, advice given and call closed.*

*Green 4 - Telephone assessment within 60 minutes (100% of the time)- alternative pathway referral, upgrade to Red/Green 1 or 2, advice given and call closed or a vehicle response within 4 hours*

I therefore do not consider that the algorithms used for coding are inaccurate or unfit for purpose based on the evidence of this case.

However, please note that AMPDS is produced by the Priority Dispatch Corporation, a private company. If you have concerns about the design of the product you may wish to contact them direct at the following address:

Priority Dispatch Corporation UK Limited.  
Suite B, 4th Floor  
Spectrum  
Bond Street  
Bristol  
BS1 3LG

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

*Yes h. di*

**DAVID PRIOR**