

Professor Sir Bruce Keogh
National Medical Director
Skipton House
80 London Road
SE1 6LH

Joanne Kearsley
HM Acting Senior Coroner
1 Mottram Street
Mount Tabor
Stockport
SK1 3PA



1st September 2016

Dear Ms Kearsley,

Re: Regulation 28 – Christopher Philip Fields

I refer to the Coroner's Regulation 28 Report concerning the death of Christopher Philip Fields and I would like to express my deep sympathy to Mr Fields' family.

The Report outlined three concerns with only the following point identified as being potentially relevant to NHS England:

3. The fact that the call taker coded the call properly and yet this case involved a patient who was clearly critically injured and despite that fact it still did not generate a Red response, suggests that algorithms used for coding are not accurate and not fit for purpose. In my view this is an extremely serious flaw and may/will lead to future deaths occurring unless it is remedied. (NWAS, Secretary of State, NHS England).

I note the response from North West Ambulance Service (NWAS), letter dated 10 June 2016, confirming that the initial ambulance call was correctly coded as Green 2 because the deceased was conscious, breathing and able to walk at that time. It appears from the limited material in my possession to have been the second assault that inflicted critical injuries and proved fatal, as indicated by the Pathologist's report.

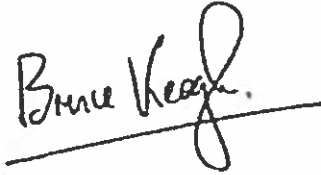
NWAS uses the Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS), an internationally recognised system developed and accredited by the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch, and tested on many millions of 999 calls in the United Kingdom and overseas. Whilst AMPDS is generally regarded as fit for purpose, it can never be 100% accurate because it relies heavily on the accuracy of the information supplied by a caller, and to a lesser extent on the interpretation of ambulance call handling and dispatch staff. The Coroner may appreciate that these human elements are vulnerable to individual error.

NHS England is currently leading a complete review of ambulance coding systems and trialling a new system. This review will take into account both the
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outcome of previous similar 999 calls as well as the concerns raised by Coroners in Regulation 28 Reports. We anticipate making recommendations in autumn 2016. It is our intention that this review should improve the service provided and clinical outcomes for future patients contacting the 999 ambulance service.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Keogh". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Professor Sir Bruce Keogh KBE, MD, DSc, FRCS, FRCP
National Medical Director
NHS England