



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

*From Jackie Doyle-Price MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Mental Health,  
Inequalities and Suicide Prevention*

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Our Ref: PFD-1161207

Miss Anna Crawford  
HM Assistant Coroner, Surrey  
HM Coroner's Court  
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13 March 2019

Dear Miss Crawford

Thank you for your correspondence of 20 December to Matt Hancock about the death of Miss Kirsty Walker. I am responding as Minister with responsibility for mental health and prison health services and I am grateful for the additional time in which to do so.

I have noted the concerns raised in your report about the length of time it takes to transfer a prisoner to a secure hospital under section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983<sup>1</sup> and the risk this poses to future deaths. It is not clear from the detail in the report as to the extent that this was a contributing factor in the death of Miss Walker. However, I acknowledge the evidence given at inquest in relation to this and the cause for concern of future deaths.

You issued your report to NHS England as well as the Department. NHS England is responsible for the commissioning of prison health care services and the commissioning of specialist mental health services, including secure adult mental health beds. It is therefore for NHS England to respond to you in detail. However, I am aware of, and hope you will be assured by, the work currently being undertaken by NHS England around improving access to mental health services, including secure inpatient care, for offenders with mental health difficulties.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/20/contents>

In line with the *Five Year Forward View for Mental Health*<sup>2</sup> and the *Strategic Direction for Health Services in the Justice System*<sup>3</sup>, NHS England is working with partners to ensure that offenders receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time. It is carrying out service reviews across all adult high, medium and low secure services. The review will include the service capacity required, taking into account a number of criteria such as levels of security, gender, service types and geographical location.

NHS England is also reviewing the current prison transfer and remission guidance, published by the Department of Health and Social Care in 2011<sup>4</sup>. In particular, the review is looking at whether the timescales within the guidance take into account clinical urgency and need. The revised guidance will be subject to full, public consultation in due course.

In addition, a new service specification for an integrated mental health service for prisons in England<sup>5</sup> is being implemented, its aim to provide clear, minimum service requirements that will deliver improved standards and outcomes, including on transfer times where appropriate.

I hope this information is helpful and outlines the steps that are being taken to improve access to mental health services for offenders with mental health difficulties. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.



**JACKIE DOYLE-PRICE**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/hlth-justice-directions-v11.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-transfer-and-remission-of-adult-prisoners-under-s47-and-s48-of-the-mental-health-act>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/service-specification-integrated-mental-health-service-for-prisons-in-england/>