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Sussex Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

Mr Robert Simpson
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By email: hm.coroner@westsussex.gov.uk
[Redacted]

28 March 2022

Dear Mr Simpson

Inquest into the death of Jack Taylor

I write in response to your Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths dated 28 January 2022.

I was saddened to learn of the circumstances surrounding Mr Taylor's death and, on behalf of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT), extend our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Following Mr Taylor's inquest, SPFT has been working with Sussex Police to identify changes needed to address the concerns that were raised during the inquest and, subsequently, captured within your Regulation 28 Report. Below is the joint-response to paragraph 2 of your report, agreed between SPFT and Sussex Police. Sussex Police will be writing to you separately to confirm their agreement and to provide you with their response to paragraph 3 of your Report.

The joint SPFT & Sussex Police 'Absent without Leave' (AWOL) Policy:

A working group was established with healthcare professionals from Mill View Hospital and officers and staff from Sussex Police with the remit to improve the joint response to incidents of patients who are absent without leave. The working group is proposing several solutions to the problems identified and is working towards implementing these jointly. These solutions include:

[Redacted]

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www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk

A teaching trust of Brighton and Sussex Medical School

Developing a **Missing Persons Template** (including an action plan)

To improve information flow and joint assessment of risk, work has commenced on co-developing a 'Missing Persons Template' to be used by hospital staff to share all relevant information about a potential missing person with Sussex Police in a timely manner. A literature review has been undertaken to identify how other localities implement such templates and this will be used to complete a first draft of the template in April.

Work will take place to move towards having a final draft in May, when the completed template and accompanying protocol surrounding it will then be embedded into the multi-agency Absent Without Leave (AWOL) Policy which is currently subject to multi-agency review and revision.

The multi-agency review and revision is overseen by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT)'s Mental Health and Mental Capacity Acts Committee and the Mental Health Portfolio within Sussex Police who will collectively have responsibility for ensuring timescales are adhered to and changes are successfully implemented.

Additionally, to improve information flow and the overall response to missing persons, it was agreed that work would commence on co-developing a **joint missing persons action plan** so both agencies can agree actions and tasks in relation to finding a missing person proportionate to the presenting risks.

The joint action plan will be developed alongside the missing persons template with a first draft being ready in April. Work will then take place to ensure this is embedded into the new AWOL Policy and practice, anticipated to be complete by May.

Proactive Approach to Managing Missing Patients

Work has been identified to improve how both Sussex Police and SPFT take a more proactive approach to managing patients who could go missing.

SPFT will invite Sussex Police's Missing Person Team to proactively meet to discuss patients who can present with a heightened risk of going missing or becoming absent without leave. This approach is likely to be embedded into the revised AWOL Policy however this practice has been adopted immediately by Mill View Hospital and the Brighton Missing Persons Team.

These proposed changes, which currently focus on the Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit at Mill View Hospital, will work towards improving joint working and developing an improved joint response to people who go missing from healthcare facilities operated by SPFT.

Regarding the concerns you raise in paragraph 1 of your report, I confirm that SPFT has considered its full range of powers to secure the return of AWOL patients and recognises that:

- at times, SPFT staff have been over reliant on the police to assist with patient return; and
- improvement can be made to how SPFT's resource, both staff and vehicles, is used to return patients.

As indicated above, revisions are being made to the AWOL Policy, including the missing persons template and joint action plan; these will assist SPFT staff to understand what information the police need to inform their decision-making on the allocation of their resources, as well as providing greater clarity on who is responsible for actions as the AWOL incident evolves.

SPFT recognises that police involvement in the return of a patient may be or may become unnecessary and, at times, a patient's return by SPFT staff, rather than the police, can be preferable to some patients. Alternatively, there will be cases where risk is such that the police must be involved in the return, hence the importance of robust risk assessments, clear communication and a dynamic joint action plan.

If it is identified that SPFT are responsible for the return of the patient, then an SPFT vehicle can be used. Specifically, in relation to Mill View Hospital, an SPFT car is available on-site. SPFT is putting in place improvements to the vehicle access and availability arrangements, as a priority, to ensure staff are able to return patients on all occasions where return by the police is not required.

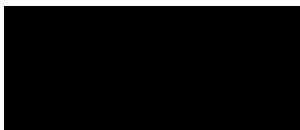
In addition, an improved escalation process has been implemented and added to the AWOL Policy so that SPFT staff are clear about site-wide support available from colleagues when additional resource is required to facilitate a patient's return.

Finally, more generally, SPFT has an ongoing AWOL reduction project which has been led by the team at the Department of Psychiatry in Eastbourne. That team introduced a number of interventions, including an evidence-based rating tool which identifies those most at risk and enables improved risk mitigation. The measures have led to a sustained reduction in AWOLs in Eastbourne, and are being rolled out across the Trust.

I am confident that the above measures and ongoing collaborative working between SPFT and Sussex Police will result in an improved response when patients go missing. We will monitor the improvements and respond to any further changes needed, to best meet our patients' needs. I envisage that it would be helpful to you to see the updated AWOL Policy so, once ratified, I will arrange for a copy to be sent to you. In the meantime, I hope that the content of this letter provides you with the assurances you need to address your concerns.

If I can be of any further assistance then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Dr 
Interim Chief Executive Officer