



# Department of Health & Social Care

From Gillian Keegan MP  
Minister of State for Care and Mental Health  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
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Our Ref: PFD-1403138

Louise Hunt  
HM Senior Coroner  
Coroner's Court  
Steelhouse Lane  
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July 2022

Dear Mrs Hunt,

Thank you for your letter of 22 April 2022 to then Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Sajid Javid, about the death of Matthew Caseby.

I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Matthew's death and offer my sincere condolences to his family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are very concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

In preparing this response, Departmental officials have made enquiries with NHS England and NHS Improvement.

Beech ward at the Priory Hospital Woodbourne in Edgbaston is an adult acute service. The adult acute Health Building Note (HBN) 03-01<sup>1</sup> is mute on the specifics of fence heights that should be appropriately employed within this service as Professor █████ raised.

In terms of acuity levels, the next step on from an adult acute mental health unit is a Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). There is no HBN covering this, but in 2017 the National Association of Psychiatric Intensive Care and Low Secure Units (NAPICU) published design guidance<sup>2</sup> and recommendations for commissioners - the minimum height should be 3m.

PICU's are often in the same building or campus as adult acute services (Woodbourne hospital has one) and a patient is moved from a general adult ward here when their care cannot be safely managed in a general ward setting, this *could* include the risk of absconding.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/HBN\\_03-01\\_Final.pdf](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/HBN_03-01_Final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://napicu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Design-Guidance-for-Psychiatric-Intensive-Care-Units-2017.pdf>

As you move up the acuity levels in mental health into secure accommodation there are prescriptive standards for fence heights that must be met on the basis of:

- Low secure services provide care and treatment who present a significant risk of harm to others and whose escape from hospital **must be impeded** (3m fence);
- Medium secure services provide care and treatment to those adults who present a serious risk of harm to others and whose escape from hospital must be prevented (5.2m fence); and
- High Secure services provide care and treatment to those adults who present a grave and immediate risk to the public and who must not be able to escape from hospital.

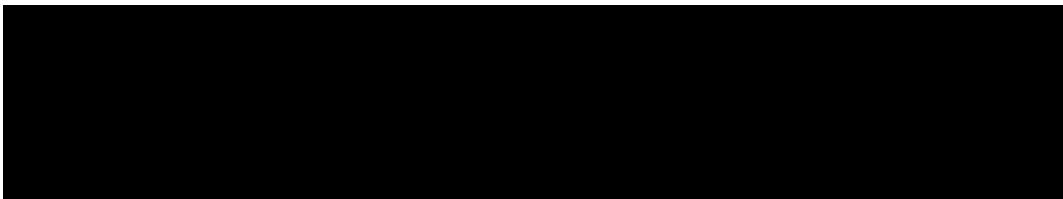
Therefore, services with increased security levels are available if there is clinical indication that the person needs to be supported in a more restrictive and secure setting. However, acute mental health wards remain the least restrictive inpatient setting for a person to be supported in.

I have asked my officials to look into your recommendation for national guidelines for perimeter fences and security in acute mental health unit outside areas. They will collect data on ward perimeters and review the evidence base and patient and family feedback.

More generally, the Government is committed to improving mental health outcomes through the NHS Long Term Plan, which will see mental health services across England supported by an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24.

We will be publishing a new long-term plan for suicide prevention as well as a new cross government ten-year plan for mental health as part of our commitment to 'level up' and improve unequal outcomes and life chances across the country.

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.



**GILLIAN KEEGAN**