



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Maria Caulfield MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Health and Social Care*

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[REDACTED]

M. E. Voisin
Senior Coroner
The Coroner's Court
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9th January 2023

Dear M. E. Voisin,

Thank you for your letter of 28 April 2022 about the death of Susan Elizabeth Carling. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for Mental Health and the Women's Health Strategy.

Firstly, I would like to say how deeply saddened I was to read of Ms Carling's death. I can appreciate how distressing her death must be for her family and those who knew her and I offer my heartfelt condolences. It is vital that we take the learnings from what happened to prevent future deaths.

In preparing this response, Departmental officials have made enquiries with NHS England and the Royal College of General Practitioners.

As you indicated in your report, one way in which health care workers are supported is through Practitioner Health. This is a free, confidential NHS primary care mental health and addiction service with expertise specifically treating health and care professionals. The service can help with a range of mental health conditions and addictions in primary care settings. They also see healthcare professionals with more severe illnesses, such as bipolar affective disorder, personality disorders and psychosis and with a range of addiction issues.

The service exists for the special needs of healthcare professionals with mental illness, how their role might impact on their ability to seek out help, and how their condition might impact on their work and potentially their own patients. The service providers are skilled at helping health professionals with their mental health whilst returning to work or training. Crucially, they work in the unique interface between health practitioners as regulated professionals and as patients with a mental illness, and as such are experts at the interface between regulation, employment and mental illness and addiction. Furthermore, the service is a multidisciplinary, integrated team, drawing together General Practitioners (GPs), psychiatrists, nurses and therapists into a single network with shared objectives, jointly caring for their patients. They have clinicians available across England offering a hybrid mix of face to face and virtual consultations.

In response to your concerns regarding the need to highlight the help available for GPs, NHS England, in collaboration with the Royal College of General Practitioners, has launched the #LookingAfterYouToo and the #LookingAfterYourTeam coaching support services. These

services provide access to mental health services for all primary care workers, managers and leaders employed or contracted to deliver work on behalf of the NHS. This is available in addition to Practitioner Health. Further to this, the Royal College of General Practitioners signposts to wellbeing and mental health support on their website, including Practitioner Health, the Doctors' Support Network and the Sick Doctors Trust, amongst others. The Royal College also held a stakeholder event in November 2022, in partnership with Doctors in Distress and Practitioner Health, to highlight the issue of suicide and to drive discussions towards potential solutions.

In addition, an area for action in the national suicide prevention strategy, Preventing suicide in England: a cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives (2012), is to reduce the risk of suicide in key high-risk groups, which includes specific occupational groups such as doctors and nurses.

The Government also launched a public call for evidence on what can be done across government in the longer term to support mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention. The call for evidence closed on 7 July 2022 and we are currently analysing the over 5,000 responses that received.

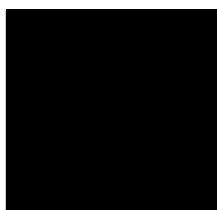
More generally, we are investing an additional £57million in suicide prevention by 2023/24 through the NHS Long Term Plan. Through this, all areas of the country are seeing investment to support local suicide prevention plans and the development of suicide bereavement services.

We also awarded 113 charities a share of £5.4million grant funding in 2021/22 to prevent suicide in high-risk groups. This funding was distributed to the suicide prevention voluntary, community and social enterprises to support service delivery.

Finally, over £45 million has been invested in 2022/23 to support the continuation of the health and wellbeing support offer for healthcare staff, which includes the 40 mental health hubs across the country that provide outreach and assessment services. This helps frontline staff receive rapid access to evidence-based mental health services. NHS England continue to develop tailored health and wellbeing offers that meet the needs of their local workforce, especially through the Mental Health Hubs in each Integrated Care System and through occupational health services that are being supported through the national Growing Occupational Health and Wellbeing programme.

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

Kind regards,



MARIA CAULFIELD