



**Department  
of Health &  
Social Care**

*From Will Quince MP  
Minister of State for Health*

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[REDACTED]

Mr G Irvine  
Acting Senior Coroner  
Coroner Area of East London  
Walthamstow Coroner's Court  
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E17 8QP

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2023

Dear Mr Irvine,

Thank you for your letter of 25 May 2022 about the death of Ian Cockfield. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for Health and Secondary Care, and I thank you for the additional time allowed.

I would like to begin by offering my deepest condolences to Mr Cockfield's family and loved ones. It is vital that we take learnings where they are identified to improve NHS care 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, as well as the relevant regulator in this instance, the Care Quality Commission. I am further advised that the East London Foundation NHS Trust have provided a detailed response to the concern raised in your report.

You may wish to know that the current National Institute for Health and Care Excellent (NICE) Clinical Guideline, Falls in older people: assessing risk and prevention, recommends that hospital inpatients in all care settings aged 50 to 64, who have been identified as being at higher risk of falling, also be offered a multifactorial falls risk assessment in addition to all patients aged 65 or older.<sup>1</sup> A multifactorial assessment would contain risk factors such as cognitive impairment, continence problems, falls history, footwear, medication, mobility problems and/or balance problems and visual impairment. The guideline also suggests some conditions that may induce a higher risk of falling in younger patients as sensory impairment, dementia, previous fall, stroke, syncope, delirium or gait disturbances.

Moreover, NICE are beginning a full update to this guideline, due to be published in 2024.<sup>2</sup> The scope of this update includes hospital inpatients in all care settings and specifically mentions patients under the age of 65 including those with mental health problems. NHS England, as a stakeholder in the guideline review, will continue to ensure that the risks specific to people in this patient group are recognised.

In addition, NHS England commissions and works closely with the Royal College of Physicians to deliver the National Audit of Inpatient Falls, which is based upon the recommendations in

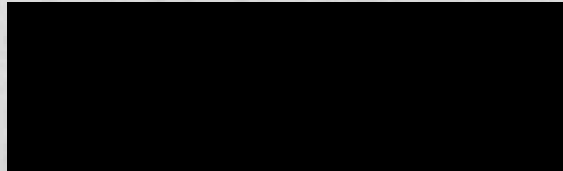
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg161>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-ng10228>

the NICE guidance.<sup>3</sup> They have worked hard to increase uptake of the audit in mental health trusts and in 2021 63% of eligible Trusts were taking part, an increase from 38% in 2020. NHS England will continue to encourage and support mental health trusts to take part in the audit, as well as subsequent quality improvement opportunities and resources.

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

Yours sincerely,



**WILL QUINCE MP  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/national-audit-inpatient-falls-report-autumn-2021>