

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Ms N Persaud
HM Coroner
East London Coroners Service
Adult Learning College
127 Ripple Road
Barking,
IG11 7PB

[REDACTED]
Acting Chief Executive
Trust Head Office
West Wing
CEME Centre
Rainham
Essex
RM13 8GQ

T: [REDACTED]

Your ref: 14169257
Trust ref: 1106 AP CR

10 August 2022

By email only to: [REDACTED] and
[REDACTED].

Dear Madam

Re: Inquest touching upon the death of Louise ALLEN

I refer to your letter dated 18 July 2022 and the enclosed Regulation 28 report, issued in respect of your concerns regarding the risk of future deaths.

Concerns

At the conclusion of the hearing into the death of Louise Allen, you expressed concern on the matters below:

1. There is a need within the Trust for better continuity of care. There are not enough care co-ordinators to ensure that continuity of care is provided. There are high turnovers of staff.
2. Efforts need to be made to make the post of care co-ordinator more attractive. The evidence heard that the pay within North East London Foundation Trust is not comparable to other Trusts.
3. Care Co-ordinators within the Trust are currently carrying excessive caseloads.
4. There has been an increase in the number of referrals coming into the service. There has been no commensurate increase in the number of care co-ordinators.
5. Whilst the Trust has over recruited in terms of the financial budgets, it is still under recruited in terms of the clinical need for care co-ordinators.

Acting Chair: [REDACTED]
Acting Chief Executive: [REDACTED]

We have taken the following actions in relation to your concerns:

Need for better continuity of care, not enough care co-ordinators to ensure continuity of care is provided, and high turnover of staff.

The service continuously recruits temporary staff, through the Trust's temporary staffing service until all positions are permanently recruited to.

Temporary staffing has been advised to prioritise Mental Health posts and to use off-framework agencies to support retaining locum support, and consistency to manage short term vacancies.

A NELFT training programme has been developed for band 5 staff to help them develop the skills and competencies to take up the role of care coordinator at band 6 level. This will constitute an intensive and supportive career development programme designed to attract recently qualified staff who have the potential to progress rapidly and will also help with staff retention in the community recovery service.

The trust has invested 2.5 million pounds to support Nursing, Allied Health Professions and Psychological Professions recruitment initiatives which includes international recruitment.

Efforts to make the post of care co-ordinator more attractive, and that pay at NELFT is at least comparable to other NHS Trusts.

NELFT has programmes in place to encourage staff to work in the organisation; the Trust has used non-recurrent funding to recruit additional staff to manage the real time increase of referrals and acuity of patients, following the pandemic. All new starters' salaries are matched to their previous employment, so they do not lose out on their pay when they join NELFT. There is also a staff wellbeing service in place which is available to substantive and locum staff. In addition, the Trust is working to understand how staff can be supported through cost-of-living issues.

The Trust is undertaking a programme of mental health transformation, which once fully implemented will enhance the service offered to patients. Peer support workers have been given additional roles, with a focus on enhanced training in order that they can share their lived experiences with patients they manage. The Trust is re-designing care coordinator posts to increase the support available for professional development. Furthermore, the Trust continues to use Trust-wide work streams to have a zero-nursing vacancy; to use rolling advertisements to recruit and retain staff; utilise international recruitment to attract more professionals to work at NELFT; and to consider the use of financial incentives to attract and retain staff.

Reducing the case loads of care coordinators, to ensure they are not excessive.

A recent quality audit of staff caseloads carried out on 19 July 2022 showed a reduction in care coordinator caseload from 27-30 patients per care coordinator to 19-27 patients. There is a further audit planned on 19 August 2022 to review the caseload numbers per care coordinator

In the meantime, the Trust is introducing a Management and Supervision Tool (MaST) to support staff and their managers to ensure care coordinator caseloads are manageable and that appropriate supervision and support are in place; this is anticipated to be fully operational by December 2022.

No commensurate increase in number of care coordinators to match the increased number of referrals to the service.

Acting Chair: [REDACTED]
Acting Chief Executive: [REDACTED]

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A Quality Summit for the Waltham Forest Community Recovery Team was launched in July 2022. The purpose of the summit was to agree key quality priorities to improve patient/staff safety and quality of service delivery in the Waltham Forest Directorate. The focus will be on mental health services following feedback from Coroner Regulation 28 reports and learning from Serious Incidents. It is expected that actions will be developed and implemented and will include service re-design based on the level of demand and need, following the Quality Summit. Recommendations from staff and service users will inform the actions to be taken.

Trust-wide initiatives will also be considered, including system wide consultation within the NE London Integrated Care System to strategically consider the needs of the population and the associated risks.

Despite over-recruitment of care coordinators in financial budgets, the service is under-recruited in terms number of care coordinators.

The community mental health transformation programme will provide a better skill mix that will reduce the pressure on the care coordinator role. 8 additional Band 6 Community Psychiatric Nurses are being recruited to meet increased workload.

The NELFT Waltham Forest leadership team continuously reviews the needs and risk of the service. Additional staff will continue to be placed in the service to manage the need and risk, efforts are made at Trust executive and North East London system wide level to review the resource and staffing levels deployed into the service.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for raising your concerns as part of this inquest. We find learning from inquests extremely valuable and are very grateful for your comprehensive investigation, which benefits not only the families of the deceased, but also the Trust and its service users.

I trust that the above and the attached action plan will reassure you that the Trust has taken this tragic death very seriously indeed, and that it reflects our commitment to improve care quality and patient safety.

If I can further assist, please do contact my office on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Acting Chief Executive

Enc: Action Plan

Acting Chair: [REDACTED]
Acting Chief Executive: [REDACTED]

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