



Department of Health & Social Care

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

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Mr Peter Taheri
Assistant Coroner
Coroner Area of Suffolk
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5th December 2022

Dear Mr Taheri,

Thank you for your letter of 29 June 2022 about the death of Paul Alexander Meadows. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for Mental Health.

Firstly, I would like to say how deeply saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Mr Meadows's death. I can appreciate how distressing his death must be for his family and those who knew and loved him and I offer my heartfelt condolences. It is of course 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 and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

There are, sadly, wider patient safety issues in the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust which the CQC and NHS England are currently working with the Trust to address. The CQC is carrying out the enforcement process of a Section 29A Warning Notice and have already scheduled a follow up inspection, which will be unannounced to the Trust. The CQC's engagement and visits to the Trust will continue, with further visits planned for the near future.

The Trust is also in NHS England's Recovery Support Programme, which provides help to the most challenged Trusts by ensuring there is greater focus and support on systems, as well as organisations. The Trust has appointed a new Improvement Director and has produced an improvement action plan, as required.

My predecessor, Gillian Keegan, also met with families, as well as local MPs, the CQC and NHS England to ensure that their views are heard in shaping what happens next to support the Trust to improve services. I will continue this engagement going forwards.

Furthermore, we are committed to supporting everyone's mental wellbeing and we want to ensure services are there for anyone who experiences a mental health crisis or has suicidal thoughts. That is why we are investing at least £2.3 billion of additional funding a year by 2023/24 to expand and transform mental health services in England so that two million more people will be able to access mental health support.

Additionally, in 2021/22 we provided £500 million to accelerate our expansion plans. Of this, £110 million was used to expand adult mental health services, including investment in crisis services and maintaining the delivery of the 24/7 urgent mental health helplines stood up during in the pandemic.

Over the next 3 years, we are investing £150 million of capital funding into schemes which address pressures on the local urgent and emergency mental health care pathway. This includes £7 million to roll out dedicated mental health ambulances from 2023/24 onwards with up to 100 vehicles across the country by the end of 2024/25.

With regards to differences in funding available to Norfolk and to Suffolk, NHS England is responsible for determining allocations of financial resources to Integrated Care Boards from April 2022. The allocations process uses a statistical formula to make geographic distribution fair and objective, so that it more clearly reflects local healthcare need and helps to reduce health inequalities. Local commissioners are responsible for decisions about the provision of services in their area and ensuring that they meet the needs of the local population.

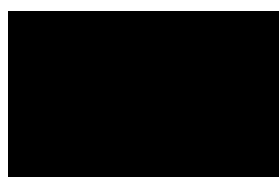
Turning to your matter of concern regarding staff vacancies, we are fully committed to attracting, training and recruiting the mental health workforce of the future. Through our plans set out in 'Implementing the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health' and 'Stepping Forward to 2020/2021: The mental health workforce plan for England', we have expanded and diversified the types of roles that are available.

The latest data shows that, as of June 2022, there are 133,573 full-time equivalent (FTE) people in the mental health workforce nationally. This includes only those people who work directly on mental health, across NHS trusts, NHS foundation trusts, and Integrated Care Boards. This is an increase of over 6,900 more (5.4% increase) FTE staff in the mental health workforce compared to June 2021.

The NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20–2023/24 sets out the need for the mental health workforce to grow by over 27,000 during this time frame, to support the expansion and transformation of NHS mental health services and give an extra two million people the mental health support they need. We invested £111 million in 2021/22 to grow the mental health workforce to deliver these ambitious commitments. Further, Health Education England and NHS England have been working with Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to confirm plans to 2024. The aim is for every ICS to look at everything they can do to meet the Implementation Plan ambition, including through innovative service models, increasing supply, and improving retention and recruitment.

Finally, it is unacceptable that Mr Meadows's death has happened, and we will take the shared learnings from this case to push progress forward. I hope this reply helps to reassure you that partners across the health system are working to make improvements on the basis of this report to prevent this happening in future.

Kind regards,



MARIA CAULFIELD