



Ms Jacqueline Lake
 Senior Coroner for Norfolk
 [REDACTED]

East of England Ambulance
 Service NHS Trust
 Whiting Way
 Melbourn
 Cambridgeshire
 SG8 6NA

20 October 2022

Dear Ms Lake

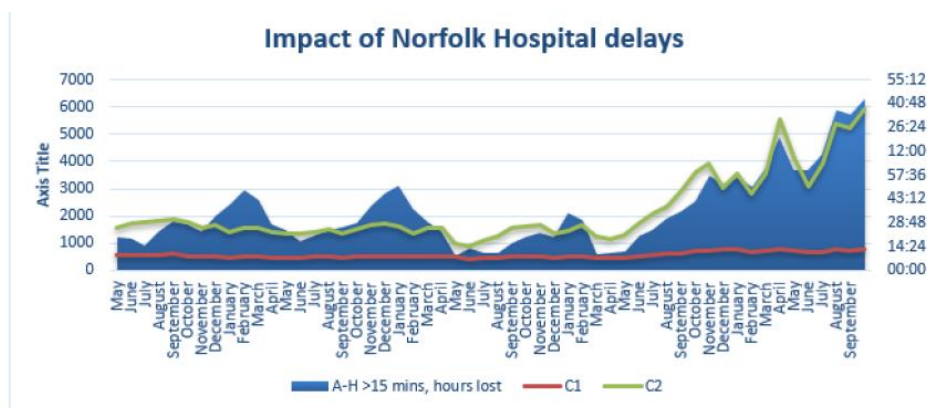
Inquest into the death of Christina Avis Ruse

I am writing further to the inquest into the death of Christina Ruse, which took place on 22 August 2022, and the concerns you raised in relation to the delay in EEAST attending. I understand that Chris Hewetson gave evidence in relation to the steps the Trust was taking to manage the current call demand and you have requested a further review to establish if further steps should be taken in respect of this.

The Trust is working hard with our system partners across the region to ensure that our patients are safe during this challenging period. Like all other ambulance trusts, we are also working with the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch (HSIB) to continue to escalate our concerns. I have attached our current delay action plan that has recently been reviewed.

At a local level, the Trust has a number of ongoing actions in Norfolk aimed at addressing the handover delays. Daily system calls take place between EEAST, and other stakeholders, chaired by the ICB (Integrated Care Board) and respective hospitals and discuss any lengthy delays and interim measures that need to be put in place. The 'Category 1 drop and go' and 'Category 2 rapid release' projects are also in place although these are not always available at the acute due to capacity.

To highlight the nature of the handover delays, last month we lost 6295 hours of ambulance time outside hospitals in Norfolk waiting to handover, after the 15-minute handover period (i.e., not including that time). This does not account for the hours spent 'cohorting' patients, nor the lost manager time supporting this. As can be seen the effect on our C2 response time is hugely significant and correlates directly with delayed handovers. Escalations continue to take place regularly at executive level to try and ease this situation, but the trend nevertheless is still currently worsening.



The initiative mentioned earlier relate to the 'Category 1 drop and go' process which means that if a Category 1 call is received and there is a crew waiting with a patient at hospital, the crew can drop their patient off immediately to attend to the Category 1 patient. Equally, the 'Category 2 rapid release' means that if a Category 2 patient has been assessed over the phone by a Clinical Co-ordinator and revalidated as a valid Category 2 call, the rapid release programme allows a crew to handover a patient at the hospital within 10 minutes to allow that crew to then attend to the Category 2 patient. The aim of these schemes is to help improve the response time to patients who are suffering with chest pain or potentially having a stroke.

Furthermore, the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AAACE) released a briefing for HM Coroners in relation to hospital handover delays and delayed ambulance responses to 999 calls and this was shared with your office on 30 August 2022. I have also attached a copy for your information.

I am sorry for the delay that Christina Ruse and her family experienced and I would be grateful if you could pass a copy of this letter onto Christina's family.

Yours sincerely



Chief Executive

Chief Executive: Tom Abell
Chair: Nicola Scrivings
www.eastamb.nhs.uk

#WeAreEEAST 

The logo for EEAST, featuring a stylized five-pointed star with each point in a different color (red, orange, yellow, green, blue).