



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Helen Whately MP
Minister of State for Care*

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Catherine Wood
Coroner's Court and Offices
Beacon House
Whitehouse Road
Ipswich IP1 5PB

11 April 2024

Dear Mrs Wood,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths dated 11 November 2022 about the death of Derek Shaw. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for Urgent and Emergency Care. Please accept my sincere apologies for the significant delay in responding to this matter. I would like to assure you that the department is mindful of the statutory responsibilities in relation to prevention of future deaths reports and we are prioritising responses as a matter of urgency.

Firstly, I would like to say how deeply sorry I was to read the circumstances of Mr Shaw's death and I offer my sincere condolences to his family. I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

The report raises concerns about ambulance capacity and response times by East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST). In preparing this response, Departmental officials have made enquiries with NHS England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). I have been informed that the CQC carried out routine engagement with the Trust to review progress against its action plan and to ensure they comply with CQC regulations. More generally, I have been assured that the CQC will continue to have regular meetings with the NHS trusts locally to monitor risks and follow up on Prevention of Future Death reports.

As the Minister responsible for urgent and emergency case services, I recognise the significant pressure the urgent and emergency care system is facing. That is why we published our 'Delivery plan for recovering urgent and emergency care services' which aims to deliver sustained improvements in waiting times. Our ambitions for this year are to improve A&E waiting times to 78% of patients to be admitted, transferred, or discharged from A&E within four hours by March 2025 and to reduce Category 2 ambulance response times to 30 minutes across this fiscal year. The plan is available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/B2034-delivery-plan-for-recovering-urgent-and-emergency-care-services.pdf>

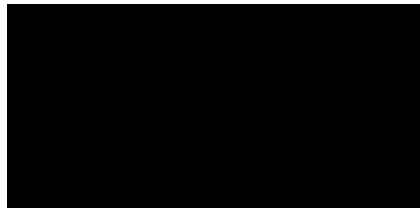
Your report highlights that EEAST were under high demand at the time of the incident. A primary aim of our delivery plan is to boost ambulance capacity. Ambulance services received £200 million of additional funding in 2023/24 to expand capacity and improve response times, and we are maintaining this additional capacity in 2024/25. This is alongside the delivery of new ambulances and specialist mental health vehicles. With more ambulances on the road, patients will receive the treatment they need more swiftly.

At a national level, we have seen significant improvements in performance this year compared to last year. In winter 2023-24, average Category 2 ambulance response times (including for serious conditions such as heart attacks and strokes) were over 12 minutes faster compared to the same period last year, a reduction of nearly 25%. EEAST average Category 2 response times were over 23 minutes faster compared to the same time period last year, a 32% reduction.

However, I recognise there is still more to do to reduce response times down further and back towards pre-pandemic levels – and this is the action we will continue to be taking as part of the government's commitment to improving NHS services and reducing waiting times.

Thank you once again for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours,



HELEN WHATELY