



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*The Rt Hon Andrew Stephenson CBE MP
Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care*

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Carly Elizabeth Henley
Newcastle Upon Tyne and North Tyneside
Coroner's office
Lower Ground Floor, Block 1
Civic Centre
Barras Bridge
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8QH

1st May 2024

Dear Ms Henley,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths of 17 February 2023 about the sad death of Ms Rachel Ross. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for health and secondary care.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Ms Ross' death and I offer my sincere condolences to their family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention. 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 take every case extremely seriously.

The report raises concerns over patient records systems used in GP services and how alerts operate for non-responders for a smear test.

In preparing this response, Departmental officials have made enquiries with NHS England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). I am also aware of the published responses provided by the GP surgery, the system provider and NHS England.

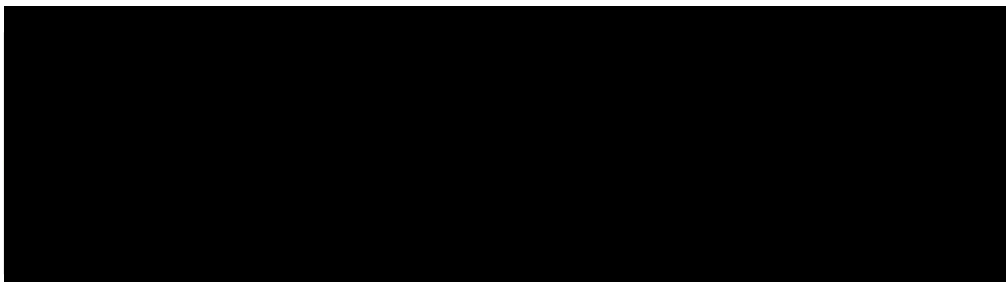
Professor Steven Powis in his capacity as the National Medical Director of NHS England has responded in detail to the concerns you have raised. I do hope that, as an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care, the response provided by NHS England has addressed your concern. I would also add that, NHS England is also in the process of creating a new IT Cervical Screening Management System (CSMS), which is due to go live in Quarter 1 2024/25. This system will enable general practice users to review a list of

their non-responders for their individual GP practice. This function will provide practices with the ability to identify and proactively remind and/or invite their non attending eligible patients to take up the offer of a cervical sample taking appointment.

In our discussions with CQC, they agree that the concerns raised by the coroner have highlighted an important area. Although CQC does not have statutory powers in relation to clinical system providers they will consider engaging with them to enquire and encourage an improvement in this area.

I hope this response is helpful and further reassures you of the work being undertaken in this vital area. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Kind regards,



**THE RT HON ANDREW STEPHENSON CBE MP
MINISTER OF STATE**