



Mr M E Hassell
Senior Coroner
Inner North London
St Pancras Coroner's Court
Camley Street
London
N1C 4PP

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4 August 2023

Dear Mr Hassell,

Thank you for your report of 13 June 2023 regarding the Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths which was sent to the Home Secretary. I am replying as the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire.

Firstly, I would like to express my sympathies to the family of Heather Findlay.

The police are responding to an increasing number of mental health incidents which they say is detracting from their ability to respond to crime. There will be cases where it is necessary for the police to be involved in incidents where there is real and immediate risk to life or serious harm, or where a crime or potential crime is involved. However, often incidents involving mental health do not require the police to attend and patients' needs are better met through a health-led approach.

The Right Care Right Person (RCRP) approach sets out a threshold to assist police decision making on responding to incidents based on a duty of care. The benefits of this are that the police should only be responding to health and social care incidents where they need to investigate a crime that has occurred or is occurring; or to protect people, when there is a real and immediate risk to the life of a person, or of a person being subject to or at risk of serious harm. This ensures the public receives the right care from the right person and reduces unnecessary police involvement.

People in mental health crisis need the right support from the right agency at the right time, often this will be a health response. Police cannot act in the stead of professional health services although we recognise that there will always be some situations where a police response may be needed. We are urging local health partners and police to work together to plan and implement RCRP in a way that delivers for their communities, to ensure that those in a mental health crisis receive the right support and that police officers can focus their efforts on investigating and preventing crime.

Local partners should agree, at the local level, on how different types of incident are to be dealt with and by whom, with delivery plans in place to safely implement changes. To support rollout and ensure that local implementation aligns with RCRP principles, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) are developing toolkits and guidance products for police forces and health will be producing their own guidance.

Improving the response to people with mental ill health is a key priority, and we continue to work with health and policing partners to identify and expand good practice to better support individuals experiencing acute mental health crisis. The RCRP approach will not change police involvement where crimes have been committed. We will continue to work with cross-government colleagues, the police, as well as health and social care partners to reduce inappropriate police involvement and support access to appropriate mental health specialists through the rollout of RCRP.

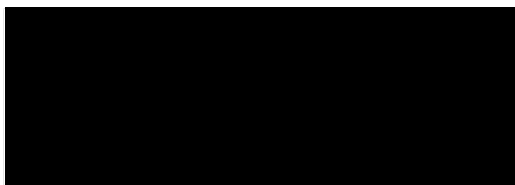
With regards to the response to the missing person report made by the East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the police investigation of a missing person report is an operational decision for individual police forces. The Home Office has no authority to intervene in operational policing matters. I cannot comment on the action and decisions taken by police officers in the course of their duties because operational matters are the responsibility of the Chief Officer of the force concerned. However, my officials have consulted the MPS to gain assurance that the correct protocols are in place in order to prevent future incidents of this nature.

The MPS response will set out details of its Affinity Protocol, a joint agreement between the MPS and ELFT, which aligns with the NPCC's framework, published in October 2020, and accessible at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-multi-agency-response-for-adults-missing-from-health-and-care-settings-a-national-framework-for-england>.

This framework provides a blueprint that local partnerships should consider when developing their own joint local policies and procedures in response to those who go missing from health and care settings. This framework is being rolled out across police forces in England through RCRP. I am satisfied that the MPS Affinity Protocol reflects the NPCC framework, and I encourage other police forces to adopt this approach to developing joint agreements with health partners in their force area in relation to missing persons.

I trust this response has demonstrated some of the measures in place to ensure appropriate responses to those who go missing from healthcare settings.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Chris Philp MP