



**Dorset**  
**Integrated Care Board**

Vespasian House  
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Dorset  
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Dear Rachael

14<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Thank you for your letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> October in relation to the inquest of Marnie Emma Hill.

Having reviewed your particular query concerning the provision of mental health care within the South West Ambulance Service, I am able to respond as follows:

Dorset has a well-established service in place to support its residents who are in crisis, namely the "Access Mental Health" service provided by Dorset HealthCare.

Access Mental Health has been operational since 2017/18 and offers the following:

- Connection Service which is 24/7 crisis line with links through 111
- Psychiatric Liaison 24/7
- Home treatment teams as an alternative to hospital
- Crisis spaces called Retreats or Community Front Rooms
- Two Crisis Houses for short respite for people who are heading towards crisis.

Access Mental Health provides a crisis offer that was fully coproduced with many partners and stakeholders including SWASFT. However, we recognise there are still some challenges relating to referring patients between services and that these are not operating as consistently as we would like; to re-assure, these issues are being actively discussed including, as set out below, how we might further enhance this through our approach to the trusted assessor model. Dorset HealthCare, SWASFT and the police are in discussion about operational processes and how they work together when supporting individuals. The trusted assessor model is one way of doing this and we are actively working through what this model might look like. We can certainly see how it could work between SWASFT and Dorset HealthCare and how both organisations could trust the assessments of the other. The discussions will hopefully ensure that all partners, with responsibility for the care of patients, can work together to enhance the local crisis offer and provide a service that works every time for people suffering a mental health crisis in Dorset.

It is the case that the SWASFT Mental Health Desk is not firmly embedded in the Dorset System. This is because of the Access Mental Health services we have locally, as well as the challenge of the Desk being located operationally and geographically at some significant distance away from Dorset. In practice, we find that this means there is a greater incidence of people being referred to the local Emergency Department because call handlers are not aware of the services, models and approaches we have available in Dorset. These services include a range of locally placed Crisis Retreats, Community Front Rooms and Recovery Houses which all support people with a rising mental health crisis.

We note that SWASFT have reported that without the 24/7 help desk people in Dorset are left without MH support that is 24/7; this is not the case. Whilst discussions are ongoing in relation to how we might maximise the benefits for Dorset residents by being partners in the SWASFT MH Desk 24/7, Dorset residents do in fact have access to 24/7 MH support and advice as set out above.

All that said, we recognise it is important to continue exploring the SWASFT Mental Health Desk service, especially as this could form an important part of other interdependent workstreams we are aiming to progress - such as a proposed development of mental health ambulance response vehicles.

All our stakeholders including SWASFT and Dorset Police are fully committed to developing the right model for the Dorset population and this will help us when deciding on any additional investment and resource to the desk beyond the level currently commissioned.

I hope this helps clarify the provision we have available and the work we are doing to ensure people in a mental health crisis have access to the right care at the right time. We would be pleased to keep you informed of developments, should this be of interest.

Could I please request that all future correspondence to NHS Dorset is sent to me either via post, or email - [REDACTED]

Many thanks

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Chief Executive Officer, NHS Dorset