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Cambridge & Peterborough Coroner's Service
Lawrence Court
Princes Street
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PE29 3PA

National Medical Director
NHS England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
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10 January 2024

Dear Coroner,

Re: Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths – Charlotte Burton who died on 28 November 2020

Thank you for your Report to Prevent Future Deaths (hereafter "Report") dated 23 November 2023 concerning the death of Charlotte Burton on 28 November 2020. In advance of responding to the specific concerns raised in your Report, I would like to express my deep condolences to Charlotte's family and loved ones. NHS England are keen to assure the family and the coroner that the concerns raised about Charlotte's care have been listened to and reflected upon.

In your Report you raised the concern that there is a nationwide shortage of suitably trained Cardiologists and that, particularly in District General Hospital settings, this means that there can be no out of hours provision for patients presenting with suspected cardiac problems to be assessed in person by a Cardiologist.

In June 2023, NHS England published the [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#), setting out how it will train, retain and reform its workforce across the next fifteen years to ensure that we are improving access, providing safe and timely urgent and emergency care and continuing to reduce elective care backlogs. The Plan is underpinned by the biggest recruitment drive in NHS history.

NHS England, together with the wider health system is also continuing to deliver the [Medical Speciality Distribution programme](#); the programme was developed in light of the [Facing the Facts, Shaping the Future report](#), published by the former Health Education England (now part of NHS England) and NHS England and a joint review of distribution of postgraduate medical training places. The Programme commenced in Autumn 2022, initially looking at three specialties, one of which is Cardiology, and will continue over the next 10-15 years. Work is in progress to ensure that the distribution of post graduate speciality training is done in a way that:

- Addresses health inequalities and improve fairness for patients across England.
- Reduces variation of patient outcomes across England.
- Create fairer distribution of training places in remote, rural, and coastal areas to meet local population needs.

A Webinar took place in November 2023, outlining how the Long-Term Workforce Plan will shape the distribution of Speciality Training posts going forward as well as providing programme updates. This can be found here: [Distribution of Specialty Training: Postgraduate Doctors in Training Webinar | Health Education England \(hee.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/resources/news/2023/11/23/distribution-of-speciality-training-postgraduate-doctors-in-training-webinar)

Patient safety remains a key driver behind this work programme, being led and delivered by NHS England and will inform future decision-making. The programme includes a range of specialities, including cardiology and will in future lead to improved access for patients to specially trained clinicians.

NHS England is also in the process of developing a plan in collaboration with system partners to support the workforce in delivering interventions that detect and optimally manage major conditions such as cardiovascular disease. This should be finalised by March 2024.

In 2013, NHS England published its [7-Day Hospital Services \(7DS\) Programme](#) which introduced clinical standards regarding the provision of a “truly seven-day NHS” and requiring acute trusts to provide board assurance compliance. This included a requirement for all cardiovascular networks to implement the four priority standards of timely consultant review, improved access to diagnostics, consultant directed interventions and ongoing review into high dependency areas across all seven days of the week. There is a good level of compliance with these standards across acute trusts and many services and surgical and diagnostic lists are operating at weekends and evenings.

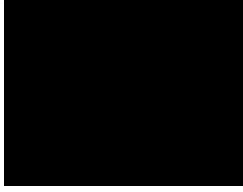
The NHS continues to encourage local health systems to develop effective workforce planning to ensure that they have the sufficient qualified staff working across their Trusts and wider system that are required for their population care needs. The [NHS People Promise](#) also helps NHS providers to consider ways to recruit and retain staff. Work is in progress to ensure that future distribution of training posts to help ensure the supply of doctors is matched to population need. You will need to refer to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) on what system arrangements they have in place for their cardiology provision and workforce, to include transfer policy on weekends.

NHS England will also consider carefully responses to your Report from the DHSC and the Royal College of Physicians and any actions required from us to support further improvement.

I would also like to provide further assurances on national NHS England work taking place around the Reports to Prevent Future Deaths. All reports received are discussed by the Regulation 28 Working Group, comprising Regional Medical Directors, and other clinical and quality colleagues from across the regions. This ensures that key learnings and insights around preventable deaths are shared across the NHS at both a national and regional level and helps us pay close attention to any emerging trends that may require further review and action.

Thank you for bringing these important patient safety issues to my attention and please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,



National Medical Director