

Mrs D Hocking

Leicester and South Leicestershire Coroner's Court
Town Hall
Town Hall Square
Leicester
LE1 9BG

National Medical Director

NHS England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

23rd February 2024

Dear Coroner,

Re: Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths – Patricia Ann Walton who died on 9 January 2023.

Thank you for your Report to Prevent Future Deaths (hereafter "Report") dated 5 December 2023 concerning the death of Patricia Ann Walton on 9 January 2023. In advance of responding to the specific concerns raised in your Report, I would like to express my deep condolences to Patricia's family and loved ones. NHS England are keen to assure the family and the coroner that the concerns raised about Patricia's care have been listened to and reflected upon.

I am grateful for the further time granted to respond to your Report, and I apologise for any anguish this delay may have caused to Patricia's family or friends. I realise that responses to Coroner Reports can form part of the important process of family and friends coming to terms with what has happened to their loved ones and appreciate this will have been an incredibly difficult time for them.

In your Report you raised the concern that there was insufficient medical staff cover over the New Year Bank Holiday period while Patricia required care. You raised that while there might be a doctor available on call to treat emergencies, there is not suitable cover to assess the subtleties of care required by patients who do not require emergency care.

In 2016, 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. The Programme focuses on the provision of acute medical care in such a way that there is no difference in quality for patients, whichever day they attend at hospital.

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](#) 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.

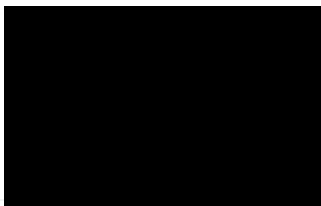
Workforce and staffing levels continue to be a challenge across the NHS and we know that this can present issues to Trusts. In June 2023, NHS England published the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, setting out how it will train, retain and reform its workforce across the next fifteen years to ensure that 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 has engaged with University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) on the matters of concern raised in your Report and has also been sighted on their response to the coroner. We note that they advise that they have already increased medical staffing at Leicester Royal Infirmary and that during bank holiday and weekends periods they are rostering for a medical consultant to be present 9am to 5pm onsite, a medical registrar onsite 24hr/7days a week and by a junior doctor onsite 24hrs/7days a week. We also note their escalation policies for staff concerned about deteriorating patients and that they plan to deliver an anticoagulation review service going forward.

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,

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National Medical Director