



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Helen Whately MP
Minister of State for Care*

*39 Victoria Street
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Lauren Costello, Assistant Coroner, for the Coroner Area of Manchester South
Coroner's Court
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG

25 April 2024

Dear HM Assistant Coroner Costello,

Thank you for your letter of 4 January 2024 about the death of Elizabeth Roberts. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for Community Health Services.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Elizabeth Robert's death, and I offer my sincere condolences to their family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are very concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

The report raises concerns about residual staffing shortages within the District Nursing Team. In preparing this response, Departmental officials have made enquiries with NHS England.

We recognise the importance of identifying the correct staffing levels in community health care. NHS England has developed a national Community Nursing Safer Staffing Tool which is being offered to community nursing providers to support them with identifying whether they have the right staffing levels in order to deliver care safely to those people in their care. This can help to identify gaps in the service and enable strategies to be developed locally to manage and address the shortfall.

In regard to system and local assurance, the region have asked Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board to discuss the case further within their System Quality Group to identify any further actions that need to be taken. I have asked NHS England for an update once actions have been identified.

Nationally, we have taken steps to increase nurse numbers and in September 2023 we met our commitment to delivering 50,000 more nurses working in the NHS compared with September 2019.

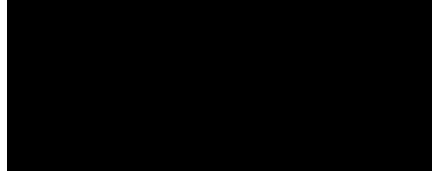
In addition, as of January 2024, there were over 68,800 full time equivalent community nurses working in NHS trusts and other core organisations in England. This is over 2,100 (3.2%) more than a year ago.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP) sets out the case for the long-term change for the NHS workforce and outlines plans to address an expected shortfall. The LTWP sets out the steps the NHS and its partners need to take to deliver an NHS workforce that meets the changing needs of the population over the next 15 years. The plan recognises the shortage

of district and community nurses, and this is a priority for the national workforce team to address. The plan sets ambitions to increase training places for district nurses by 150%, to nearly 1,800, by 2031/32.

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours,



HELEN WHATELY