



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Minister Helen Whately
Minister of State for Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

[REDACTED]

Alison Mutch,
Senior Coroner for South Manchester
Coroner's Court
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG

[REDACTED]

14 June 2024

Dear Ms Mutch,

Thank you for your letter of 14 March 2024 to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Victoria Atkins, about the death of Joseph Michael Miller. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for urgent and emergency services.

Firstly, I would like to say how deeply sorry I was to read the circumstances of Mr Miller's death and I offer my sincere condolences to his family. It is vital that where Regulation 28 reports raise matters of concern these are looked at carefully so that NHS care can be improved. I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

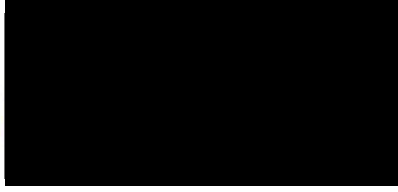
Your report raised concerns about the two call triage systems in use by NHS ambulance trusts, and the potential for patients to be given a different ambulance categorisation depending on the system used. The Department's officials have shared your report with the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS), North West Ambulance Service (NWS) and NHS England (NHSE) as the body responsibly for oversight of NHS ambulance services.

Ambulance services are required to use an approved triage system to aid initial 999 call prioritisation – the two approved systems are the Advanced Medical Dispatch Priority System (AMPDS) and the NHS Pathways system. These systems are approved on the basis of being able to determine (as far as possible) differing levels of acuity, from immediately life-threatening emergencies to patients with an urgent care need.

In considering the concerns raised about the potential for variation between categorisation, NHSE has advised the Department that it has in place a process to appropriately map the outcomes of 999 call triage systems against ambulance response time categories. NHSE has responsibility for the production, maintenance, review and revision of the dataset used in these systems, which is managed by the NHSE-chaired Emergency Call Prioritisation Advisory Group (ECPAG). ECPAG keeps the categorisation of calls under continual review, and ambulance services support this process through providing evidence and expertise to reduce unwarranted variation across services, helping ensure appropriate prioritisation, equity of access and uniformity of response across England.

Thank you once again for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours,



HELEN WHATELY