



Department of Health & Social Care

████████████████████
Minister of State for Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Our Ref: PFD – 24-06-03 - GRIFFITHS JONES

Emma Brown
HM Area Coroner for Birmingham and Solihull
Coroner’s Court
Steelhouse Lane
Birmingham
B4 6BJ

By email: ████████████████████████████████

13 June 2024

Dear Ms Brown,

Thank you for your letter of 17 April 2024 to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care ██████████ about the death of Jade Marie Griffiths-Jones. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for urgent and emergency care.

Firstly, I would like to say how deeply sorry I was to read the circumstances of Mrs Griffiths-Jones’ death and I offer my sincere condolences to her family and loved ones. 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 ambulance response times at the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) University NHS Foundation Trust, and the hospital handover delays that they experience. You have appropriately shared your report and concerns with NHS England and Birmingham Integrated Care Board who are best placed to respond on the specific action being taken locally to improve ambulance response and handover times. You also shared your report with the Care Quality Commission who I note inspected WMAS in February 2024 and, while rating the trust good overall, raised the need to improve response times.

As the Minister responsible for urgent and emergency care services, I recognise the significant pressure the NHS is facing and the impact of waiting times for patients. In January 2023, NHS England published a two-year ‘Delivery plan for recovering urgent and emergency care services’ which aims to deliver sustained improvements in waiting times with targets for this year for a minimum of 78% of patients being admitted, transferred, or discharged within four hours by March 2025, and to reduce Category 2 ambulance response times to 30 minutes on average. An update to this plan has now been published, to build on learnings from the first year and to continue to support systems to improve performance and reduce waiting times. The plan is available at: [NHS England » Urgent and emergency care recovery plan year 2: building on learning from 2023/24](#)

Your report highlights that WMAS were under high demand at the time of the incident. A primary aim of the Delivery plan is to boost ambulance capacity. Ambulance services received £200 million of additional funding in 2023/24 to expand capacity and improve response times.

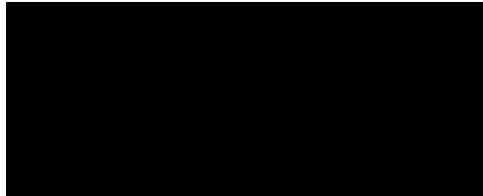
This is alongside the delivery of new ambulances and specialist mental health vehicles. With more ambulances on the road, patients will receive the treatment they need more swiftly.

I recognise that ambulance trusts work within a health and care system and issues such as delayed patient handovers to hospitals can impact on capacity and response times. To improve patient flow and bed capacity within hospitals £1 billion of dedicated funding was provided to increase staffed core hospital beds by 5,000 compared to 2022/23 plans. £1.6 billion of funding was also made available over two years to support the NHS and local authorities to ensure timely and effective discharge from hospital, helping to free up beds and reduce long waits for admission from A&E.

At a national level, we have seen improvements in performance. Since January 2023, national average A&E 4-hour performance has improved from 70.8% in 2022/23 to 72.1% in 2023/24. In 2023-24, average Category 2 ambulance response times (including for serious conditions such as heart attacks and strokes) were over 13 minutes faster compared to the previous year, a reduction of 27%. WMAS average Category 2 response times were over 12 minutes faster in 2023-24 compared to the previous year, a 25% reduction.

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

Yours,

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