

Emma Brown
The Birmingham and Solihull Coroner's Court
Steelhouse Lane
Birmingham
B4 6BJ

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

31 May 2024

Dear Coroner,

Re: Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths – Jade Griffiths-Jones who died on 4 June 2023.

Thank you for your Report to Prevent Future Deaths (hereafter "Report") dated 17 April 2024 concerning the death of Jade Marie Griffiths-Jones on 4 June 2023. In advance of responding to the specific concerns raised in your report, I would like to express my deep condolences to Jade's family and loved ones. NHS England would like to assure the family and the coroner that the concerns raised about Jade's care have been taken into account and reflected upon.

The report raised concerns around the demands on West Midland Ambulance Service and hospital handover delays and how ambulance response times have been impacted by this. NHS England recognises the significant pressure on ambulance services since the COVID-19 pandemic. Ambulance services have seen longer response times across all categories than before the pandemic, as well as issues associated with handing over ambulance patients in a timely way at some NHS Trusts. NHS England prioritised improving ambulance performance during 2023/24, supported by the [Delivery plan for recovering urgent and emergency care services](#), published in January 2023.

The plan outlined key actions to recover and improve urgent and emergency care services, including:

- improving ambulance response times;
- increasing ambulance capacity through growing the workforce (for example, increasing clinical capacity in control rooms);
- alongside broader system actions to improve flow through hospitals and reducing handover delays;
- speeding up discharges from hospitals;
- expanding new services in the community.

These key actions should help ambulance crews to get back on the road to the next waiting patient more rapidly.

We understand ambulance response times have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, however, there have been improvements in ambulance response time targets nationally during 2023/24. The 2023/24 year-end Category 2 mean was 36 minutes

23 seconds which is 13 minutes 37 seconds lower than 2022/23. For 2024/25, the Delivery Plan continues to focus on the improvement of ambulance Category 2 response times. Ambulance services are expected to maintain the increases in capacity achieved throughout 2023/24, alongside the continued development of alternative referral pathways (e.g. urgent community response) to ensure that patients receive timely and high-quality care.

Handover delays have reduced nationally over 2023/24 but still show a significant issue to achieving increases in ambulance service capacity, particularly within certain geographical areas. Targeted handover improvement work (for the acute trusts with the highest amount of handover delays) has been undertaken throughout 2023/24. Hospitals have worked collaboratively with ambulance services and the NHS England Regional teams to ensure patients are able to be handed over as quickly as possible. This includes utilising Fit 2 Sit for patients who can safely sit on a chair (rather than a hospital trolley), and direct referrals to Same Day Emergency Care and Urgent Treatment Centres.

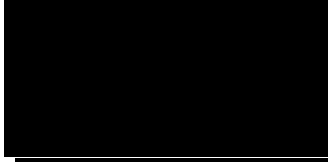
Improving ambulance handover delays is the responsibility of all providers, commissioning bodies (Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)) and regulators. This year (2024/25) NHS England, through regular assurance and planning rounds, are engaging with ICBs on a weekly basis until assurance has been given that everyone is working to reduce emergency department crowding, improve acute front door services and release the ambulance service/s within their commissioned frameworks for 2024/25. In addition, throughout 2024/25 further work will be done to enhance and drive further efficiencies in acute patient flow, avoidable attendance for the frail and elderly emphasising same day care and care closer to home as a priority and this will aim to further improve the quality and standard of care across the emergency unscheduled care pathway.

Within the Midlands region, the ambulance contract oversight is managed via a joint commissioning model, with regular system review meetings held by Derbyshire (East Midlands Ambulance Service) and Black Country (West Midlands Ambulance Service), and NHS England Midlands region. The system review meeting explores service delivery, concentrating upon the support needed to improve efficiencies, response standards, quality of care and the improvements needed to address the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) [Regulation 12 for Safe care and treatment](#). It is recognised through the joint commissioning model, and by East and West Midlands ambulance services that operational productivity has fallen (post pandemic). Both West Midlands and East Midlands have improved the position greatly throughout 2023/24, but also recognise that there is further work to be done. I would also like to provide assurance that the Midlands Regional Director has been sighted on and reviewed your report and response.

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