



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Minister Andrew Stephenson
Minister of State for Health*

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Mr Adam Hodson
The Birmingham and Solihull Coroner's Court
Steelhouse Lane
Birmingham
B4 6BJ

19 June 2024

Dear Mr Hodson,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths dated 23 April 2024 about the death of Ronald Henry Spencer. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for NHS workforce planning.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Ronald Henry Spencer, and I offer my sincere condolences to his family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

The report raises concerns over winter pressures in the hospital where Ronald received care, wider staffing pressures in the local area and planning to find longer term solutions to workforce shortages.

In preparing this response, Departmental officials have made enquiries with NHS England.

We recognise winter pressures are having a significant impact on UEC services. That is why, 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 a target for this year 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:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PRN01288_ii_Delivery-plan-for-recovering-urgent-and-emergency-care-progress-update-and-next-steps-May-2024.pdf

To support ambulance services, ambulance trusts received £200 million of additional funding in 2023/24 to expand capacity and improve response times. In addition, 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 billion was invested this year through the Discharge Fund in commissioning packages of care for people being discharged and improving discharge processes. A £40 million fund was

also launched in September 2023 for local authorities in areas with the greatest challenges on urgent and emergency care. Local authorities used this funding for social care provision and strengthening admissions avoidance and discharge services over the past winter. The number of people discharged from hospital with packages of health and social care support has increased by 9% from the end of March 2023 to the end of March 2024.

Since publication of the recovery plan in January 2023, there have been improvements in performance. Nationally 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 over 27%.

As of January 2024, there are 21,531 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff working in University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, which is 1,636 (8%) more than in 2023. This includes 2,882 FTE doctors and 5,289 FTE nurses which is 214 (8%) more doctors and 448 (9%) more nurses than in 2023.

The Surgical Specialty Group within the Trust has 38 (6%) more FTE doctors, and 260 (6%) more consultants in January 2024 than in 2023.

In addition, as of January 2024 there are 45,024 FTE staff working within NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB, which is 3,127 (7%) more than in 2023. This includes 5,058 FTE doctors and 11,379 FTE nurses which is 313 (7%) more doctors and 649 (6%) more nurses than in 2023.

There are 1,033 FTE doctors working in the Surgical Specialty Group within the ICB, which is 52 (5%) more than in 2023. This includes 444 FTE Consultants, which is 24 (6%) more than in 2023.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (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.

NHS England is working at a national level to deliver the LTWP. This is a robust and effective strategy to ensure we have the right number of people, with the right skills and support in place to be able to deliver the kind of care people need. It includes ambitions to grow the workforce by significantly expanding domestic education, training and recruitment, as well as actions aimed at improving culture, leadership and wellbeing so that more staff are retained in NHS employment over the next 15 years.

These actions will aim to close anticipated staffing shortfalls in the NHS in the long term, however Trusts have a responsibility to ensure safe staffing levels in the current day to day operation of their hospitals. This is in line with Care Quality Commission (CQC) Regulation 18 which states that providers must deploy enough suitably qualified, competent and experienced staff to enable them to meet all other regulatory requirements.

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

Yours sincerely,



**THE RT HON ANDREW STEPHENSON CBE
MINISTER OF STATE**