



Department of Health & Social Care

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

Our Ref: PFD – 24-04-29 Hindmarsh

Assistant Coroner Hannah Berry
South Yorkshire (West)
Medico Legal Centre
Watery Street
Sheffield
S3 7ES

By email: [REDACTED]

3 July 2024

Dear Ms Berry,

Thank you for your letter of 17 April regarding the death of Sophie Hindmarsh. 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 Ms Hindmarsh's 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 by Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust (YAS) and hospital handover delays. You have appropriately shared your report and concerns with West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and NHS England (NHSE). Departmental officials have made enquiries with NHSE and West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board who I understand will be writing to you directly on the specific actions being taken locally to improve ambulance response and handover 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, NHSE 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:

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

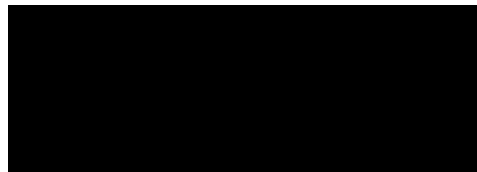
Your report highlights that YAS were under high demand at the time of the incident. To support ambulance services, ambulance trusts received £200 million of additional funding in 2023/24 to expand capacity and improve response times. In addition, to improve patient flow and bed capacity within hospitals £1 billion of dedicated funding was provided to increase staffed core hospital beds by 5,000 compared to 2022/23 plans.

£1.6 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. 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%. YAS average Category 2 response times were over 9 minutes faster in 2023/24 compared to the previous year, a reduction of almost 23%. In May 2024, average patient handover times in the YAS region were 28 minutes 58 seconds, the fourth consecutive month average handover times have been less than 30 minutes.

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

Yours,



HELEN WHATELY