



Department of Health & Social Care

*From Minister Helen Whately
Minister of State for Care
39 Victoria Street
London
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Our Ref: [REDACTED]

Lauren Costello
HM Assistant Coroner
Coroner's Court
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG

By email: [REDACTED]

3 July 2024

Dear Ms Costello,

Thank you for your letter of 8 May to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regarding the death of Bobilya Mulonge. 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 Mulonge'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 at North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust (NWAS) and that, despite a number of actions being taken by the trust, response times are still being impacted by long patient handover times at A&E. In preparing this response, my officials have made enquiries with NHS England (NHSE) who have in turn liaised with Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board and NWAS.

I am advised that NHS organisations locally are continuing work to support reductions in handover delays. A Hospital Handover Improvement Working Group continues to provide focus on this issue across Greater Manchester. Learning from the best performing trusts is shared across the region and a hospital handover Operational Improvement Plan has been developed with NWAS colleagues. This focusses on key areas including alternative options for conveyance, in particular direct referrals to Same Day Emergency Care, expanding and formalising Greater Manchester Falls response services and Urgent Community Response services to support further reduction in conveyance, and strengthening governance to improve risk reporting and escalation practices.

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

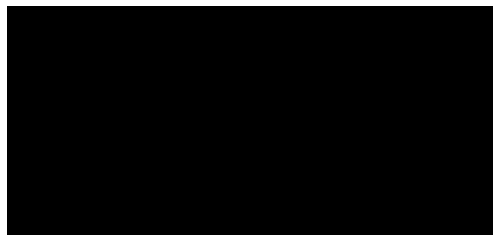
Your report highlights that NWAS were under high demand at the time of the incident. Ambulance services received £200 million of additional funding in 2023/24 to expand capacity and improve response times.

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. 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%. NWAS average Category 2 response times were over 13 minutes faster in 2023/24 compared to the previous year, a 32% reduction. In May 2024, average patient handover times in the NWAS region were 31 minutes 30 seconds, over 7 minutes faster than January 2024.

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

Yours,



HELEN WHATELY