



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From [REDACTED]
Minister of State for Health

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Our ref: [REDACTED]

HM Coroner Gareth Jones
Record Office
Orchard Street
Chichester
PO19 1DD

By email: [REDACTED]

12 September 2024

Dear Gareth,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 18 July sent to the Department of Health and Social Care about the death of Ms Noura Hardy. I am replying as the Minister of State for Health with responsibility for elective care.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Ms Hardy's death, and I offer my sincere condolences to their family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are very concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

The report raises concerns over the length of time Ms Hardy was on a waiting list for heart treatment - for nine months from June 2022 until her untimely death in March 2023. Clinical evidence given at the inquest states that the long term interim steroid use, whilst on the waiting list, significantly weakened Ms Hardy's heart muscles such that she suffered a perforation which subsequently led to her death.

I want to assure you that tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for this government, as we get the NHS back on its feet. We have committed to achieving the NHS Constitutional standard that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment (RTT), by the end of this parliament.

We recognise that it is unacceptable that some patients are waiting 9 months for definitive cardiology treatment. The NHS and Department are providing additional regional and national support and scrutiny to the most challenged trusts with the largest backlogs of long waiters and will continue to work towards the target in NHSE's 24/25 planning guidance to eliminate waits of over 65 weeks by September 2024.

Furthermore, this government is committed to change the NHS so that it becomes not just a sickness service, but able to prevent ill health in the first place. A focus will be on ensuring fewer lives are lost to the biggest killers and reducing deaths from heart disease and stroke by a quarter within ten years.

In preparing this response, Departmental officials made enquiries with NHS England (NHSE) in order to gain a more detailed response at local level and received the below information:

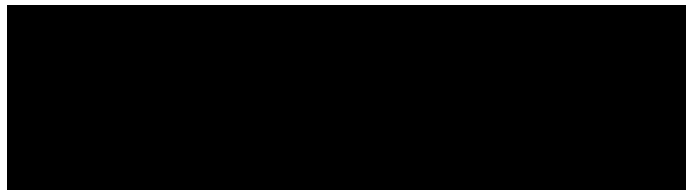
With regard to reviewing the long-term use of steroids, University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust confirmed that the patient was noted to be significantly breathless and had steroid-dependent arteritis, and reviews were part of her ongoing care and treatment for her conditions.

The consultant explained in his evidence that cardiology waiting times were longer due to the hangover effect of covid, and that Ms. Hardy suffered a complication which would happen regardless of the waiting list times. Waiting time information on the NHS My Planned Care website states the current waiting times are:

- First outpatient appointment – 24 weeks.
- Waiting time for treatment (outpatient or inpatient) – 23 weeks.

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

Yours sincerely,



MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH