



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From [REDACTED]
Minister of State for Care

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Our ref: [REDACTED]

HM Coroner Alison Mutch
Coroner's Court,
1 Mount Tabor Street,
Stockport
SK1 3AG

By email: [REDACTED]

08 November 2024

Dear Ms Mutch

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 24/09/2024 sent to the Secretary of State about the death of George Neville Coulthard. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for Care.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Mr Coulthard's death, and I offer my sincere condolences to their 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 the shortage of suitable places in care, preventing Mr Coulthard from receiving the appropriate care in a care home/nursing home setting, and creating delays in allocating beds to patients requiring admission. It also shows a lack of communication between health and social care providers regarding the appropriate setting which Mr Coulthard should have been sent to, the adequate level type of care required for the patient, and the limited access to information and support regarding wound care.

In preparing this response, my officials have made enquiries with NHS England to ensure we adequately address your concerns.

Individuals should be discharged from hospital in a timely manner with the right care and support, to ensure better outcomes for patients and reduce the risk of medical complications. The Greater Manchester NHS Foundation Trust has provided a timeline and explanation for Mr Coulthard's delayed discharge from Wythenshawe Hospital.

Although Mr Coulthard was medically optimised, he was still receiving therapy input to work with him on his sitting balance from 18 – 23 December 2024. Within this timeframe Mr Coulthard also experienced a short period of feeling more unwell on 20 December 2023, where he was experiencing shivers which recovered after 24 hours. He was also reviewed

by the plastics team on 23 December 2023 regarding his complex wound, discussed with [REDACTED], Plastics Consultant, to confirm that further management was via the tissue viability team with twice weekly dressing changes. The Integrated Team (IDT) would not have seen Mr Coulthard until he was both therapeutically and medically optimised as the therapy information can be crucial when placing someone.

On 23 December 2023, Mr Coulthard was seen by the Specialist Discharge Nurse and he and his family (his partner and daughter) were spoken to in regard to options for his discharge. Later that afternoon a best interest decision was made for 24-hour care. The assessment was not submitted until 27 December 2023 due to the Bank Holiday which meant that the commissioning team was not available until then. A 'discharge to assess' referral form was received from Wythenshawe Hospital, by the Transfer of Care Hub, at Stockport NHS Foundation Trust, at 17:34 hours on Wednesday, 27 December 2023 via email. The referral was subsequently triaged at 08:28 hours, on 28 December 2023. It was noted on the referral form that Mr Coulthard lacked mental capacity. Further information was requested via e-mail, on 28 December 2023, seeking evidence of Mr Coulthard's Mental Capacity Act assessment and Best Interest decision outcome.

On Friday, 29 December 2023, information was received back from Wythenshawe hospital. In line with commissioning arrangements, a senior multi-disciplinary team triage (Continuing Healthcare Lead, Adult Social Care Lead and Transfer of Care Hub Operational Lead) confirmed Mr Coulthard did require twenty-four-hour nursing provision and was, therefore, identified as being on Discharge Pathway 3 (discharge to a care home placement, coordinated through the care transfer hub, for people with the highest levels of complex needs).

Subsequently, the discharge form completed by Wythenshawe hospital was shared by the Transfer of Care Hub with four nursing homes to consider whether they would accept Mr Coulthard into their care. These were the four nursing homes within the Stockport locality with capacity that could meet Mr Coulthard's needs at that time.

Between 29 December 2023 and 5 January 2024, three of the four nursing homes declined to accept Mr Coulthard. On 9 January 2024, Hilltop Hall nursing home agreed to accept Mr Coulthard into their care pending confirmation of the Continuing Health Care (CHC) funding. On 10 January 2024, funding was confirmed with an agreed welcome date of 11 January 2024. Mr Coulthard was discharged from Wythenshawe hospital and transferred to Hilltop Hall nursing home on 11 January 2024. Mr Coulthard's referral was triaged by a band 7 nursing team lead within the Transfer of Care Hub to review current needs, establish the most appropriate discharge pathway and package of care to meet those needs. This was actioned within 48 hours including requiring the additional information.

Looking at this case, the Greater Manchester NHS Foundation Trust agrees that, although it can take time to complete all the necessary arrangements for a safe and appropriate transfer of care for someone with complex needs, the time from a decision that Mr Coulthard was medically optimised (18 December 2023) to his actual transfer to Hilltop Hall Nursing Home (11 January 2024) was too long.

The government recognises the need to do more to ensure that patients are discharged in a timely manner, and to the appropriate care setting, to allow for a more effective and quicker recovery, and prevent tragic medical complications such as those suffered by Mr Coulthard. This year, the NHS and local authorities are receiving £1 billion through the Discharge Fund to help them improve capacity for post-discharge support and reduce delayed discharges.

This funding is pooled via the Better Care Fund, which requires integrated care boards (ICBs) and local authorities to make joint plans and pool budgets for the purposes of providing more joined-up and effective care. Every acute hospital has access to a care transfer hub. These hubs bring together professionals from the NHS and social care to manage discharges for people with more complex needs and who need extra support. Statutory guidance on hospital discharge (updated in January 2024) sets out how local authorities and NHS bodies can ensure that people are discharged safely from hospital to the most appropriate place and continue to receive the care and support they need, taking into account the legal duties in the Health and Care Act 2022.

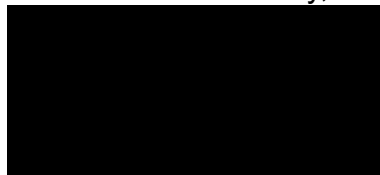
Regarding the lack of communication between the discharging team and the community teams, the Greater Manchester NHS Foundation Trust agrees that there was little purpose in the transfer to Bramhall Manor, due to the rapid deterioration in Mr Coulthard's condition and the fact that he did not benefit from the daily therapy intervention that the 'Discharge to Assess' therapy team assessed Mr Coulthard to require on 14 January 2024. As stated in section 82 of the Health and Care Act 2022, health and care systems and providers should work together to ensure that efforts to discharge individuals from hospital into social care are joined up and make best use of available resources. This involves communication regarding patients' needs and providing accurate information to care providers.

Concerning the matter that there was no evidence that the management team had sought to clarify the position to ensure the internal documentation reflected the correct position regarding the type of care required for Mr Coulthard, the team at Hilltop Hall acknowledge that they did not attend the hospital to assess Mr Coulthard. Such assessments enable a home team to gain a clear understanding of an individual's current care needs and circumstances. The Home Manager acknowledges that this should have happened and confirms that a change in practice resulting from this case has been that pre-admission assessments are now always undertaken.

Effective communication between health and care teams is vital for providing appropriate care for patients and facilitating quick recovery. The discharge guidance published in January 2024 reflects the duty in the Health and Care Act 2004 for NHS bodies and local authorities to cooperate. The guidance make clear that local areas should agree the discharge models that best meet local needs and are effective and affordable within the budgets available to NHS commissioners and local authorities.

I hope this response is helpful and that it demonstrates that we are taking active steps to provide patients with the care that they need to prevent future deaths. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

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