



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]
*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Patient Safety, Women's Health and Mental Health*

39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

Our ref: [REDACTED]

HM Senior Coroner Nigel Parsley
The Coroners Court and Office
Beacon House
Whitehouse Road
Ipswich
IP1 5PB

By email: [REDACTED]

23 December 2024

Dear Mr Parsley,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 9 October 2024 sent to the Department of Health and Social Care about the death of Nigel Hutton Hammond. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for patient safety and mental health.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Nigel's death and I offer my sincere condolences to his 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. Thank you for the additional time provided to the Department to respond to the concerns raised in your report.

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

The report raised concerns about Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) not being permitted to make direct referrals to the emergency Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Team provided by the Trust. You were concerned that had the AMHP been able to directly refer Mr Hammond to the Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Team, they could have supported him and possibly prevented his tragic death. I have been informed that Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Trust has worked jointly with Suffolk County Council to confirm a guidance protocol. This will foster better communications and understanding between the AMHP staff and crisis team, emphasising the need for discussion and communication prior to Mental Health Act assessments. This allows them to consider the least restrictive care pathways. The protocol will mean that through speaking to each other before the assessment or decision to stand down an assessment AMHP staff mitigate any need to go through the GP.

Additionally, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Trust is clarifying the need for this communication where there is a determination to stand down a Mental Health Act assessment, in order to make the best person-centred mental health plan for an individual.

I understand that the Trust will be providing further information on these points in its response to your report.

I have been assured by NHS England that crisis services, including Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Teams, are available at short notice to help individuals resolve a mental health crisis or to support them while it is happening. Additionally, from this year, all mental health providers in England offer access to 24/7 age-appropriate crisis support through NHS 111 via the 'select mental health option' – making it easier than ever to seek help.

NHS England's ambition is not just to improve the access points to specialist mental health services, but to bring significant improvements and expansion in the services that 'sit behind' these access points so that people can be facilitated to access support that meets their needs and preferences in a more timely way. To this effect, NHS England is beginning to measure response times to those presenting to urgent and emergency mental health services, either in community and/or emergency departments, within the appropriate timescales.

Furthermore, I'd like to reassure you that over the past few years, the NHS has been developing a new community mental health framework to improve community support for people with severe mental illness.

As part of our mission to build an NHS fit for the future, NHS England is working to make sure more mental health care is delivered in the community, closer to people's homes, through new models of care and support, so that fewer people need to go into hospital and that beds are available for when people need higher levels of support.

In addition, in September 2023 the multi-sector and cross-government suicide prevention strategy for England was published. The five-year strategy set out actions aimed at reducing the rates of suicide in England and work continues to implement these actions.

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

Yours sincerely,

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**PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
PATIENT SAFETY, WOMEN'S HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH**