




Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

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

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Our Ref: 

Jacqueline Lake  
Senior Coroner  
County Hall  
Norwich  
NR1 2UA

08 January 2025

Dear Mrs Lake,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths dated 28 October 2024 about the death of Malcolm John Taylor. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for mental health and patient safety.

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

I understand your concerns about insufficient mental health beds being available both locally and nationally to meet patients' needs. I am sure you will appreciate that the number of mental health inpatient beds required to support a local population is dependent on both local mental health need and the effectiveness of the whole local mental health system in providing timely access to care and supporting people to stay well in the community, therefore reducing the likelihood of an inpatient admission being necessary.

I expect individual trusts and local health systems to effectively assess and manage bed capacity and the 'flow' of patients being discharged or moving to another setting. I recognise that mental health services have been under significant pressure in recent years due to the rise in demand and the Department will continue to work with the NHS to address capacity across the system.

Over the past few years, the NHS has been developing the community mental health framework to improve community support for people with severe mental illness, thus avoiding the need for an inpatient admission where possible and freeing up more beds.

NHS England's 2024/25 priorities and operational planning guidance reinforces this focus on improving patient flow as a key priority – with local health systems directed to reduce the average length of stay in adult acute mental health wards to deliver

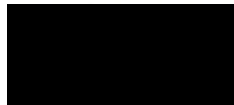
more timely access to local beds. And in areas where there is a clear need for more beds, this has been addressed in part through investment in new units, as part of a this whole system transformation approach.

To help support such decisions, the Department published statutory guidance on *Discharge from mental health inpatient settings* in January 2024 and which is available at: [Discharge from mental health inpatient settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discharge-from-mental-health-inpatient-settings). This sets out how health and care systems should work together to support discharge from all mental health and learning disability and autism inpatient settings for children, young people and adults.

As part of our mission to build an NHS fit for the future, we will make sure more mental health care is delivered in the community, close 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.

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

Yours sincerely,

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