



# Department of Health & Social Care

Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care)

39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

Our ref:

HM Coroner Guy Davies  
Cornwall Coroner's Service,  
Pydar House, Pydar Street,  
Truro, Cornwall  
TR1 1XU

By email:

03 February 2025

Dear Mr Davies,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 10 December 2024 sent to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about the death of Charles George Edward Devos. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for urgent and emergency care.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Mr Devos' 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.

The report raises concerns regarding the operational pressure on the South West Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWAST) as a result of systemic issues including those impacting social and community services. I recognise the concerns raised with health and care delivery in the region, which align with representations from local members of parliament.

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

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board (ICB) recognises the continued challenges the area has in relation to ambulance handover delays. Their winter plan for 2024/25, covers three overarching areas to support sustainable improvement:

- Maximising the utilisation of admission avoidance services such as Community Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC), Community Assessment and Treatment Units (CATU) Minor Injury Units, Virtual Wards, right care and x-rays cars. These services are in place to keep people well at home, avoiding ambulance and the Emergency Department demand wherever possible and instead focussing on delivering care for individuals at home or outside of the trust.

- Patient flow improvements have been introduced to ensure that patients get to the right team at the right time without encountering delays. In addition to this, the ICB are committed to making sure patients, their families and carers participate in decisions around their care and safe discharge.
- Working to improve hospital flow by focussing on timely discharges from both the acute trust and local community services. T

In addition, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care System, single point of access (SPOA) went live in November 2024. This is a collaborative model aimed at combining a number of current functions into a single, multidisciplinary, co-located, 24/7 virtual centre.

The SPOA aims to reduce the number of ambulances going to ED by directing to alternative community provision when appropriate and allow the virtual wards to manage a wider cohort of patients with senior clinical cover.

Data from 11 November 2024 to 2 January 2025 shows that over 2000 cases have been through the SPOA. Only 25% of these cases resulted in the patient being transferred to the emergency department with the remaining being managed either at home or a community-based service.

At national level, I agree that ambulance response times have been below the high standards that patients should expect in recent years. We are determined to tackle the challenges facing the system, which is why we are taking a systemic approach through our Plan for Change to rebuild the health service.

The Government will always be honest about the challenges facing the NHS and, although we are committed to returning ambulance response times to the safe operational standards set out in the NHS Constitution, we must be clear that there are no quick fixes.

However, we are determined to turn things around through providing investment and implementing reforms. That is why the Chancellor announced £25.6 billion of additional healthcare funding over the next two years covering 2024-2026. In Spring 2025, to accompany this additional investment the Government will publish its 10-Year Health Plan, that will set out the radical reforms for the NHS so it can tackle the problems of today and tomorrow.

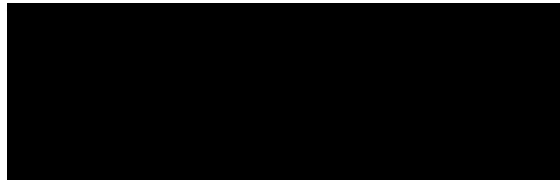
The 10 Year Health Plan will focus on ensuring three big reform shifts in the way our health services deliver care. First, from 'hospital to community' to bring care closer to where people live. Second, from 'analogue to digital' with new technologies and digital approaches to modernise the NHS, and third from 'sickness to prevention' so people spend less time with ill-health by preventing illnesses before they happen. The reforms will support putting the NHS on a sustainable footing for the future. In the shorter-term, by this Spring we will also set out the lessons learned from this winter and the improvements that we will put in place to improve urgent and emergency care ahead of next winter.

Turning to the concerns raised about social care, the Government is launching an independent commission into adult social care as part of our critical first steps towards delivering a National Care Service. The Commission, which is expected to begin in April

2025, will form a key part of the government's Plan for Change, recognising the importance of adult social care in its own right, as well as its role in supporting the NHS. It is a once in a generation opportunity to transcend party politics and engage in genuine debate on how we can deliver a National Care Service, ensuring all voices are heard and putting the voices of those with lived experience at the heart of the conversation.

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

Yours sincerely,



**MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH**