



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care)

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Our ref:

HM Coroner Ian Michael Arrow
The County of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon EX2 4QD

By email:

20 February 2025

Dear Mr Arrow

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 13 December 2024 sent to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about the death of Ms Jean Langan. I am replying as the Minister of State for Health with responsibility for the NHS Estate.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Ms Langan'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:

- A need for a real time data base of Hospital Helicopter Landing sites to ensure the safe landing of helicopters.
- A need to ascertain the contact details of the relevant manager of each Helicopter landing site at all Hospital Trusts which receive helicopters.
- More particularly to address the points below, as set out by Hogan Lovells who are the representative for the Air Service Operator Bristows in the letter of the 6 of December 2024:

- 1) Details of the responsible person/accountable manager for each NHS England hospital with a Hospital Helicopter landing site (HHLS).
- 2) Copies of all Standard Operating Procedures as they exist now insofar as they relate to helicopter operations.

- 3) An update on the status of their Helicopter Operations Manual (HOM) with target date for completion.
- 4) Confirmation that NHS Trusts have engaged with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to ensure all relevant personnel have attended or are planned to attend the CAP 1264 course. A target date for completion should be provided.

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

We will learn from this tragic event and will take action to help mitigate the risk posed to members of the public, staff, and flight crew at hospital helicopter landing sites (HHLSSs) across the UK. DHSC has a limited role in enforcing HHLSS safety.

DHSC has carefully considered your report and its recommendation to develop a database of HHLSSs. We are engaging with NHS England and the Department of Transport to determine how best to implement this recommendation and ensure a database is fit for purpose. Turning to your recommendation to ensure each HHLSS has an accountable manager, we agree a named accountable manager is essential for the safe running of HHLSS and NHS England now have this information for all Trusts. As of the 31 January 2025 a named accountable manager has been identified and supplied, this is essential to the establishment and maintenance of an HHLSS database.

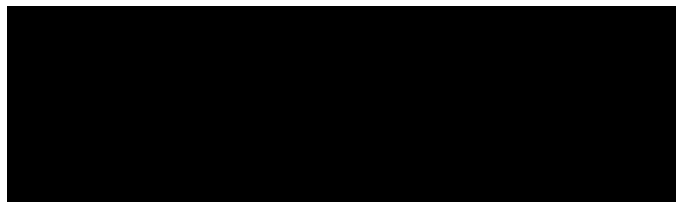
DHSC has worked with NHS England to implement the requests in the letter (noted above) from Bristow's, the Helipad operator for Search and Rescue Service (SARS) helicopters dated the 6th of December 2024 to the coroner. Work is currently ongoing to deliver this.

HHLSS are not licensed landing sites like aerodromes or airports. Instead, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) provides non-statutory guidance to the NHS on HHLSSs, through the Civil Aviation Publication (CAP) 1264 "Standards for helicopter landing areas at hospitals". This guidance covers issues such as operation and management, covering approach and departure paths, obstacle clearance, lighting, signage, and communication protocols.

NHS England expects NHS trusts to follow the CAP1264 guidance. Through work they are undertaking to address the points set out above (and in Bristow's letter of 6 December) NHS England will ensure that HHLSS meet the CAP 1264 requirements, as appropriate.

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

Yours sincerely,

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MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH