



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care)

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Our ref:

HM Coroner Catherine Wood
North East Kent Coroner's Service
Oakwood House
Oakwood Park
Maidstone
Kent
ME16 8AE

By email:

09 April 2025

Dear Mrs Wood,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 04 February 2025 sent to the Department of Health and Social Care about the death of Dorothy Lilian Reid. 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 Ms Reid's death, and I offer my sincere condolences to her 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 A&E waiting times, bed capacity and patient experience at Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mother Hospital and nationally.

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

The Government is clear that patients should receive the highest standard of service and care from the NHS. We acknowledge that urgent and emergency care performance has failed to deliver that standard in recent years. We have been honest about the challenges facing the NHS and we are serious about tackling the issues; however, we must be clear that there are no quick fixes. I would like to assure you we are committed to continuing to improve services to ensure patients can access the right care first time, only visiting A&E when necessary, and returning waiting times to the NHS constitutional standard where at least 95% of patients in A&E will be admitted, transferred or discharged within 4 hours.

As a first step, in the Autumn Budget, the Government announced an extra £22.6 billion in day-to-day spending in 2025/26 for the NHS compared to 2023/24. An additional £3.1bn further capital investment over 2 years will provide the highest real-terms capital budget since before 2010.

We recognise that investment alone won't be enough and are determined that it must go hand in hand with fundamental reform. On 5 December 2024, the Government published the Plan for Change (available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-forchange>), that set the mandate for the direction of change with clear milestones in five national missions, including building an NHS that is fit for the future.

On 30 January 2025, the Government published 'Road to recovery: the government's 2025 mandate to NHS England', that clearly set out delivery instructions for the NHS through the prioritisation of five key objectives aimed at driving reform within the NHS. Improving A&E and ambulance wait time was a prioritised objective in the mandate to specifically address the current challenges facing urgent and emergency care. On the same day NHS England published the 2025-26 planning guidance that contained the operational delivery detail for local NHS systems. The planning guidance included an implementation target for improving A&E waiting times compared to 2024/25, with a minimum of 78% of patients seen within 4 hours in March 2026.

The NHS will focus on delivering the following range of practical actions to improve performance in 2025/26:

- increasing the proportion of patients seen, treated and discharged in 1 day or less using the principles of same day emergency care (SDEC)
- optimising the urgent care offer to meet the needs of their local population, including the use of urgent treatment centres (UTCs)
- increasing the percentage of patients discharged by or on day 7 of their admission.

Regarding the concern raised about bed capacity and delays to patient discharge from hospitals, this government will make sure that hospital departments are no longer blocked due to delayed discharges. By developing local partnership working between the NHS and social care, we will ensure we no longer have over 12,000 patients every day waiting to be discharged.

We are reforming the Better Care Fund to ensure pooled NHS and local authority funding spent on social care contributes to wider efforts to reduce emergency admissions, delayed discharges, and care home admissions. We will continue to join up health and care services by supporting care workers to safely take on further duties to deliver delegated healthcare activities, such as blood pressure checks and other healthcare interventions, so that people can receive more routine checks and care at home without needing to travel to healthcare settings.

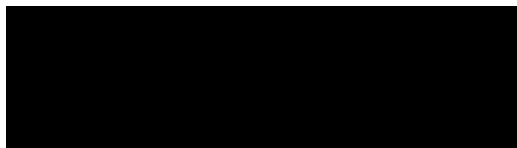
Later in the Spring, to accompany the additional investment in the NHS, the Government will publish a 10-Year Health Plan which will set out the radical reforms for the NHS. The health plan will focus on ensuring three big reform shifts in the way our health services deliver care.

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 so it can tackle the problems of today and the future.

In addition, we will shortly set out further actions to be taken during 2025-26 to support improvements to urgent and emergency care performance this year.

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