



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care)

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Our ref:

HM Coroner Jacques Howell
Hertfordshire Coroner Service,
The Old Courthouse,
St Albans Road East,
Hatfield,
Hertfordshire
AL10 0ES

By email:

27 June 2025

Dear Mr Howell,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 2 May sent to the Secretary of State about the death of Paul Anthony Burke. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for urgent and emergency care.

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

The report raises concerns regarding prolonged ambulance response times, operational pressures faced by the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust and ambulance handover delays. 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 expect and receive the highest standard of care from the NHS. The Government also accepts that the NHS's urgent and emergency care performance has been below the high standards that patients should expect 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.

In Summer 2025, the Government will publish its 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.

But we know that we need to start making progress immediately. On 6 June 2025, we published our Urgent and Emergency Care Plan for 2025/26. The plan requires the NHS to focus on those activities that will have the biggest impact on improving urgent and emergency care performance, including ambulance response and handover times:

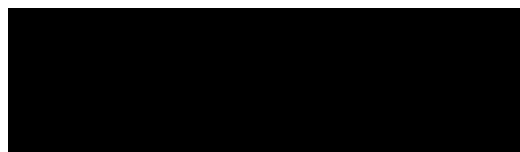
- at least 78% of patients in A&E departments will be seen within 4 hours. A&E 4hour performance in April 2025 was 74.8%;
- reduce ambulance handovers to a minimum of 45 minutes, helping get 550,000 more ambulance back on the road for patients, and reduce category 2 ambulance response time to 30 minutes. Category 2 ambulance performance in April 2025 was averaging c.27 minutes;
- reduce the number of patients waiting over 12 hours for admission or discharge from an emergency department to less than 10%. 137,207 patients (9.9%) waited over 12 hours from arrival in April 2025;
- capital funding of almost £450 million to increase provision of Same Day Emergency Care, Mental Health Crisis Assessment Centres, avoiding unnecessary admissions to hospital and supporting the diagnosis, treatment and discharge on the same day for patients;
- support the prevention of people becoming seriously ill from winter respiratory viruses including flu by making it easier to access routine vaccinations for staff and patients.

In January 2025, we set out priorities for the NHS and local authorities on how to move to a neighbourhood health service that delivers more care at home or closer to home. We are asking local systems to systematically implement six core components of neighbourhood health, which will help people stay healthy and independent for longer and reduce unnecessary time spent in hospital, including tackling hospital discharge delays which will improve patient flow through hospitals and reduce ambulance handover delays.

These measures mark a fundamental shift in our approach to urgent and emergency care – moving from fragmented efforts to genuine collaboration across the whole system and mean better coordination between NHS trusts and primary care to identify patients most vulnerable during winter.

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