



Northern Care Alliance
NHS Foundation Trust

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Telephone: [REDACTED]
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29 July 2025

Mr Christopher Long
HM Senior Coroner for Lancashire with Blackburn and Darwen

Sent via email to: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Long

Inquest into the death of Michelle Mason

Thank you for bringing your concerns about the availability of thrombectomy services across Lancashire and Cumbria to my attention in your Preventing Future Deaths Report, dated 2 June 2025.

I was saddened to read the circumstances of Ms Mason's death and would like to start by offering my condolences to her family. I would also like to emphasise our commitment to working collaboratively with partners across the Northwest (NW) to ensure 24/7 provision is available for all patients across the region.

Matters of Concern

The matters of concern that you raised are:

- “(1) NHS England national service specifications provide for a 24/7 thrombectomy service which is not currently being delivered in Lancashire and there is no clear plan to deliver that service
- (2) There is a lack of understanding from non-stroke specialist clinicians in Lancashire as to when and where thrombectomy services are available for patients in Lancashire
- (3) There is no mutual aid regionally, even where thrombectomy is available, clinically appropriate, it is known lack the procedure is likely to result in death and it is anticipated resources are available to complete the procedure. ”

Response

Matters of Concern 1 and 2:

The Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust (“the Trust”) is commissioned to provide mechanical thrombectomy services across Greater Manchester. The Trust is not in a position to respond to the first and second areas of concern.

Matter of Concern 3:

I understand that evidence was given to the Inquest that a transfer to Salford Royal Hospital for a thrombectomy was not an option for Ms Mason, as she was unfortunately outside of the time critical clinical window for the procedure.

Geography and transfer times are a critical consideration for thrombectomy services. Every hour of delay from stroke onset to treatment equates to a 10% loss of function and the geographical catchment for services takes this into consideration. Transfer times from Lancashire and Cumbria make the provision of thrombectomy at Salford Royal Hospital within the clinically required timeframes for this population challenging to achieve, with potential impact on patient outcomes. Access to imaging is critical to facilitating the rapid clinical decision-making required for safe, timely care. For patients in the Lancashire and South Cumbria catchment, this is not currently available to our clinicians. I believe this also applies to provision by the Walton Centre for Neurology and Neurosurgery NHS Foundation Trust in Liverpool.

These challenges are recognised by NHS England ("NHSE") and are the subject of ongoing discussions. It is our understanding that the service provided from Royal Preston Hospital now covers 7 days per week, 8am – 10pm. The team here at Northern Care Alliance will continue to work with NHSE, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals and the Walton Centre to explore options to provide the Lancashire and South Cumbria catchment with access to this service overnight. A meeting between the Trust, NHSE and Lancashire Teaching Hospitals took place on 15 July 2025 to discuss this, where possible options for providing aid overnight were explored. Follow-up meetings will include representation from all NW thrombectomy providers to ensure all possibilities are thoroughly explored and will aim to progress plans and clarify timelines. We will work with our clinicians to support this process.

Our thrombectomy service is based at Salford Royal Hospital and is an integral part of stroke services for the population of Greater Manchester. It has developed over many years to ensure quality and resilience; and is the largest service in the country outside London. We are working closely with Professor Stephen Powis (National Medical Director of NHSE England) and Dr David Hargroves (National Clinical Director for Stroke) to further expand capacity and to improve the resilience of equipment infrastructure.

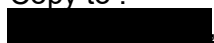

As Chief Executive of the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust, I commit to continuing to support the discussions with other key stakeholders to help improve access to thrombectomy services for all patients across the North-West, while maintaining quality and long-term sustainability.

Yours sincerely




Chief Executive Officer

Copy to :

 Chief Executive, NHS England
 Chief Executive, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals
Ms Mason's family: 