



Department of Health & Social Care

Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care)

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Our ref: [REDACTED]

HM Assistant Coroner Stephen Covell
The County of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QD

By email: [REDACTED]

24 July 2025

Dear Mr Covell,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 3 June 2025 sent to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regarding the death of Brian Garrick. 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 Garrick'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.

Your report raises concerns over ambulance waiting times 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 service and 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.

To start with, 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, to help deliver 40,000 extra appointments a week and cut NHS waiting times. 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-for-change>), 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 the 6 June 2025, we published our Urgent and Emergency Care Plan for 2025/26. The Plan focuses on improvements that will see the biggest impact on UEC performance next winter and on making UEC better every day, backed by a total of nearly £450 million of funding. The Plan will:

- Provide almost £450 million of capital investment for Same Day Emergency Care, Mental Health Crisis Assessment Centres and new ambulances, avoiding unnecessary admissions to hospital and supporting the diagnosis, treatment and discharge on the same day for patients
- Reduce ambulance handovers to a maximum of 45 minutes, helping get 550,000 more ambulances back on the road for patients, and reduce Category 2 ambulance response time to 30 minutes
- Improve patient flow through hospitals, ensuring at least 78% of patients in A&E departments are seen within 4 hours and reduce the number of patients waiting over 12 hours for admission or discharge from an emergency department

There is a national focus to improve Category 2 response time performance as these responses make up over half of all ambulance call outs and incidents within this category are of a high, lifethreatening nature. Improving Category 2 response times will improve ambulance performance generally, as more resources will then be available to attend lower acuity incidents. In May, average Category 2 ambulance response times were almost 5 minutes faster compared to the previous year, a reduction of 14.7%.

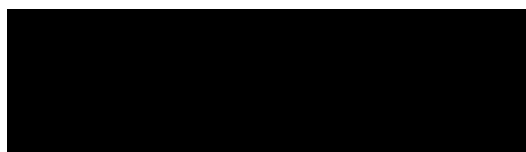
NHS England is working with systems to reduce ambulance handover delays, working towards delivering hospital handovers within 15 minutes with joint working arrangements that ensure no handover takes longer than 45 minutes. I recognise that this will be challenging in the South West, where handover delays have been much longer than this, but I am determined that we tackle these long delays across all areas. Nationally, in May 2025, average national handover times were 29 minutes and 30 seconds, an improvement of 2 minutes 44 seconds from the previous year.

In June 2025, we published our 10-Year Health Plan which sets out how we will reform the NHS, including urgent and emergency care services, with a key focus on shifting urgent care into the community through new Neighbourhood Health Services.

The health plan focusses 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.

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

Yours sincerely,



MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH