



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

HM Senior Coroner Alison Mutch
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG

15th October 2025

Dear Ms Mutch,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report dated 20 August addressed to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regarding the death of Ricky O'Connell. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for urgent and emergency care.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere condolences to Mr O'Connell's family and loved ones. The circumstances described in your report are deeply concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to our attention.

Your report raises important concerns regarding ambulance response times and handover delays. In preparing this response, my officials have consulted NHS England (NHSE) and North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) to ensure your concerns are addressed thoroughly.

The Government is committed to ensuring patients receive the highest standard of care from the NHS. We acknowledge that the urgent and emergency care (UEC) performance has not consistently met expectations in recent years, and we are taking serious steps to address this. Building an NHS fit for the future is one of our five key missions.

In June 2025, we published our 10-Year Health Plan which sets out how reforms across the NHS, including UEC care services. The Plan outlines three major reform shifts:

- From hospital to community, bringing care closer to where people live
- From analogue to digital, modernising services through technology
- From sickness to prevention, helping people stay healthier for longer

We also published our [Urgent and Emergency Care Plan for 2025/26](#) in June which focuses on improvements to deliver better UEC performance both daily and during winter pressures. Key actions include:

- Nearly £450 million of capital investment for Same Day Emergency Care, Mental Health Crisis Assessment Centres and new ambulances
- Reducing ambulance handovers to a maximum of 45 minutes, and Category 2 response times to 30 minutes on average
- Improving patient flow through hospitals to 78% of patients seen in A&E departments within 4 hours and reducing 12-hour waits

NHSE continues to work closely with ambulance trusts including NWS to improve Category 2 response times. You note there have been improvement in response times, which is reflected in the latest performance figures:

- In August 2025, the national average Category 2 response time was **27 minutes 3 seconds** compared to **27 minutes 25 seconds** in August last year.
- In NWS, the average response time was **23 minutes 4 seconds**, well ahead of the Government's 30-minute recovery target.

Efforts to reduce ambulance handover delays are also progressing. NWS reports significant local collaboration between Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), Acute Trusts, and NHSE regional teams. These efforts aim to ensure safe and timely patient handovers, freeing up crews to respond to emergencies in the community.

- NWS's average handover time has improved from **26 minutes 24 seconds** in August 2024 to **22 minutes 35 seconds** in August 2025.
- Their 90th centile handover time has also improved from **45 minutes 54 seconds** to **39 minutes 4 seconds** over the same period.

We will continue to monitor performance closely and work with NWS and NHSE to ensure sustained improvement. I hope this response provides reassurance that the Government is taking meaningful action to improve urgent and emergency care services. Thank you once again for raising these concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care.A small black rectangular box redacting the name of the Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care.

Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care