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HM Coroners Office
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NHS Sussex
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13 November 2025

Dear Dr Henderson,

I write in response to your Regulation 28 report dated 17 September 2025 setting out your concerns after hearing evidence at the Inquest touching on the death of Mr Keith Hankin.

I wish to begin by extending my sincere condolences to Keith's family and friends. The inquest proceedings must have been an extremely difficult time for them, and I hope that my response provides them and you with assurances that NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) has taken action to address the issues set out in your Regulation 28 report.

I address your concerns as follows, after consultation with senior commissioners and clinical teams:

Lack of clinical governance of the Community Urology Service (CUS) by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) who commissioned the service and Sussex Medical Chambers (SMC) who were responsible for providing the service.

NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) is responsible for commissioning most healthcare services for the Sussex population, including primary, community, and hospital services. All commissioned services have a standard NHS contract in place, which includes a specific service specification detailing expectations such as patient outcomes and monitoring requirements. It is recommended for use nationally by NHS Commissioners. The contract is considered to represent best practice, and it sets out the quality and assurance monitoring required along with the expectations of the service. Under the standard NHS contract, all commissioned services are required to have robust organisational quality assurance, oversight and clinical governance processes in place. All providers of NHS clinical services are required to be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and are required to comply with relevant regulations which includes Clinical Governance processes.

NHS Sussex ICB commissions a number of independent sector providers of NHS health care services as well as NHS providers. Sussex Medical Chambers are commissioned to provide non-complex community urology NHS services following a GP referral.

The role of NHS Sussex ICB through contractual management processes is to ensure that the organisational quality assurance, oversight and clinical governance processes are in place and to seek assurance where improvements are required. ICBs are required to monitor at an organisational level and do not review individual patient level information.

Following the conclusion of the inquest which highlighted HM Coroner's concerns about Sussex Medical Chamber (SMC) clinical governance NHS Sussex took the following action:

- Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) issued a Contract Performance Notice (CPN) to Sussex Medical Chambers (SMC) under the NHS Standard Contract. In response, SMC provided a comprehensive set of documents and evidence demonstrating the governance framework in place. SMC submitted its Clinical Governance Policy, supported by the Terms of Reference for its Clinical Governance Committee, which outlines the oversight structure and reporting mechanisms.
- For 2026/2027 NHS Contract negotiations, NHS Sussex has set out its expectations in relation to quality standards which includes Clinical Governance and Effectiveness, Patient Safety and Experience for all commissioned services.

Lack of Integration of the Community Urology service with the NHS Hospital Urology Services.

Through legislation, patients have a statutory right at the point of referral from general practice to choose any available consultant-led provider able to deliver the care they require (*NHS Commissioning Board and CCG (Responsibilities and Standing Rules) Regulations 2012*). For non-complex Urology cases, this choice includes community providers, able to deliver more timely care for a range of minor conditions than local NHS providers.

The providers of community-based, consultant-led services commissioned under an any-qualified-provider (AQP) contract by NHS Sussex ICB are governed by the same professional and regulatory standards as NHS organisations/clinicians. Clinicians are expected to adhere to their regulatory professional standards of safely treating patients within the scope of their individual practice or the facilities available within the service.

Where the needs of patients are such, their treatment cannot safely be undertaken by the chosen the provider, they can appropriately be referred onto another provider (NHS or non-NHS undertaking NHS work) to complete their treatment. A large proportion of non-complex urology patients can be safely managed by community providers, freeing capacity for NHS Urology services to treat appropriate patients.

When community providers determine they are unable to meet the needs of patients referred to them, they can refer the patient to NHS Urology services.

Lack of appraisal and mandatory assessment of clinicians employed by CUS.

NHS Sussex ICB does not directly employ the clinicians and is therefore not responsible for the appraisal or mandatory assessment of individual clinicians who are working either for the NHS or extra-contractually outside their NHS work. It is compulsory for a medical clinician to have valid GMC registration and to belong to a medical defence organisation. Appraisal and mandatory assessment are the responsibility of the employer which in this case was Sussex Medical Chambers and Goring Hall Hospital.

Practicing Privileges within the private sector

NHS Sussex ICB was provided with assurances from Goring Hall Hospital and by SMC that the CUS is a consultant led service. The named consultant is Mr Al Singary is on the GMC Specialist Register for urology with the entry stating that he is qualified to apply for all roles including at consultant level.

Goring Hall Hospital is responsible for decisions regarding Practising Privileges and NHS Sussex ICB has no power over the system of who is granted admitting rights.

Learning from Mr Hankin's death.

NHS Sussex ICB is not responsible for conducting serious incident (SI) investigations regarding individual patient care this is the responsibility of the providers in line with National NHSE Serious Incident Framework which was in place in 2023. Goring Hall Hospital completed the appropriate notifications to NHS Sussex.

Following the Inquest Goring Hall Hospital have submitted the final version of the Serious Incident which has followed the Serious Incident Framework. NHS Sussex have reviewed the incident and have identified that all learning and recommendations have been identified. NHS Sussex through enhanced contract quality meetings will follow up to ensure that recommendations are complete. The next meeting is on 14th November 2025.

Management of Mr Hankin at Goring Hall Hospital.

NHS Sussex ICB have served a contract performance notice to Goring Hall Hospital (Circle Health Group) in respect of services delivered at Goring Hall Hospital, following concerns about the governance and response to a serious patient safety incident. The CPN cited breaches of the NHS Standard Contract, including failure to meet clinical standards, failure to act meaningfully on serious incident learning, and lack of transparent quality assurance.

In response, Goring Hall Hospital submitted a comprehensive reply, including a revised and updated Post-Inquest Action Plan, and the finalised Serious Incident Investigation Report. The provider acknowledged differences between its original investigation and subsequent findings at inquest and has updated its internal learning and processes accordingly.

These steps, together with ongoing engagement with NHS Sussex ICB, aim to address the contractual concerns and support sustained assurance in the safety and quality of care provided at Goring Hall Hospital.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention. I trust that this response provides assurance that action is being taken to address the issues raised.

I hope that we have provided you and Mr Hankin's family with some assurance that NHS Sussex ICB has taken steps to address the concerns outlined in your report and that we are continuing to take action to prioritise patient safety.

Thank you again for raising this matter with me and please contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

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Chief Nursing Officer
On behalf of NHS Sussex