



Department of Health & Social Care

Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care)

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Mr Hassan Shah
Assistant Coroner for Northamptonshire

09 December 2025

Dear Hassan,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 28 October sent to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regarding the death of Lewis Aubrey Garfield. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for urgent and emergency care.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere condolences to Mr Garfield'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 concerns of call handler patient assessment by South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS), patient handling guidance for families, handover delays, and upcoming winter pressures. In preparing this response, my officials have consulted NHS England (NHSE) and SCAS to ensure your concerns are addressed thoroughly. I understand that SCAS have responded to your concerns in full.

We acknowledge that urgent and emergency care (UEC) performance has not consistently met expectations in recent years. However, the Government is committed to ensuring patients receive the highest standard of service and care from the NHS. That is why our 10-Year Health Plan set out commitments to restoring waiting standards to those set out in the NHS Constitution by the end of this Parliament.

We are taking serious steps to achieve this. We published our [Urgent and Emergency Care Plan for 2025/26](#) which focuses on improvements to deliver better UEC performance both daily and during winter pressures, ensuring more patients receive timely and clinically appropriate care. Key actions include:

- Nearly £450 million of capital investment for Same Day Emergency Care, Mental Health Crisis Assessment Centres and upgrading up to 500 ambulances
- Reducing ambulance handovers to a maximum of 45 minutes, and Category 2 response times to 30 minutes on average

- Enabling ambulance services to convey patients directly to non-ED facilities, such as same day emergency care services
- Improving patient flow through hospitals to 78% of patients seen in A&E departments within 4 hours and reducing 12-hour waits, as well as tackling discharge delays
- Increasing the number of patients receiving urgent care in primary, community and mental health settings

NHSE continues to work closely with ambulance trusts including SCAS to improve performance. We are pleased to be seeing year on year improvements to ambulance response times.

- In October 2025, the national average Category 2 response time was **32 minutes 37 seconds** compared to **42 minutes 15 seconds** in October last year.
- In SCAS, the average response time was **31 minutes 54 seconds** compared to **38 minutes 30 seconds** over the same time period.

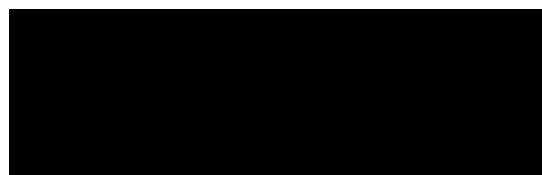
Efforts to reduce ambulance handover delays are also progressing. NHSE continues to collaborate locally with ambulance trusts including SCAS, Integrated Care Boards, acute trusts and regional teams. These efforts aim to ensure safe and timely patient handovers, freeing up crews to respond to emergencies in the community.

- In October 2025, the average handover delay nationally was 31 minutes 19 seconds compared to 40 minutes 20 seconds in October last year.
- SCAS's average hospital handover time has improved to **19 minutes 47 seconds** from **31 minutes 6 seconds** between October 2024 and 2025.

Regarding your concerns for the upcoming winter, we have implemented additional surge capacity, increased staffing, and enhanced coordination across services to mitigate seasonal pressures. This includes running stress test exercises and offering health checks to the most vulnerable.

We will continue to monitor performance closely and work with SCAS 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 bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH