



Confidential

Mr Hassan Shah, Assistant Coroner
for the coroner area of
Northamptonshire.

Trust Headquarters
1 Horizon Place
Mellors Way
Nottingham Business Park
Nottingham
NG8 6PY

Dear Mr Shar

Re: Report regarding the case of Mr Lewis Aubrey GARFIELD deceased.

I am writing to you in response to the concerns that you highlighted to the Trust following the inquest hearing into the sad death of Lewis Aubrey Garfield that concluded on 27th October 2025.

Thank you for raising the concerns regarding the delays at the hospitals which is contributing to the Trust being able to respond to patients waiting in the community like Mr Garfield.

I am aware that you will share my response with Mr Garfield's family, and I firstly wish to express my sincere condolences to them.

EMAS core purpose is to respond to patient needs in the right way, developing our organisation to become outstanding for patients and staff, and collaborating to improve wider healthcare. We will deliver safe, effective, compassionate care for patients, embedding a culture of compassion, continuous improvement.

East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) acknowledges the concerns raised by HM Coroner and I offer the following clarifications and commitments.

The concerns highlighted in your report have been reviewed and discussed by the Trust's Incident Review Group, which routinely considers issues raised through inquests and Prevention of Future Death reports. This process ensures that lessons are identified and appropriate actions are taken to address any systemic or procedural shortcomings.

Matters of Concerns raised on 28 October 2025

- a) I understand that nationally, the target time for handover from ambulance to hospital staff is 15 minutes. In the present case, the handover from ambulance to nursing staff at John Radcliffe Hospital took 25 minutes. However, at the same time, the longest handover time at Northampton General Hospital was 5 hours and at Kettering General Hospital it was 7 hours. The Trust lost 115 hours waiting to handover at Northampton over 121 hours at Kettering.**

- b) I heard evidence that steps are being taken to mitigate the impact of pressures in the healthcare system. University Hospitals of Northamptonshire have adopted the '45-minute handover' approach. Despite this, on the day of the inquest on 27 October 2025, average handover times at Northampton General Hospital were 1 hour 11 minutes and I suspect that this will get worse during the full onset of winter pressures.**

Persistent delays across the system have led to the introduction of an additional operational measure known as the 45-minute handover ceiling. This is also in this year's 2025/26 planning guidance and Urgent Emergency Care recovery plan. Under this policy, if a patient has not been formally handed over within 45 minutes, ambulance crews are required to complete a safe transfer process and leave the patient in the care of hospital staff. This includes ensuring the patient is placed in an appropriate location (such as a trolley, chair, or designated waiting area) and that essential clinical information is communicated to ED personnel. The purpose of this measure is to prevent excessive delays that compromise ambulance availability and community response times for life-threatening incidents.

It is important to note that this policy does not permit abandonment of care, hospitals assume clinical responsibility for patients from the point of arrival or after 15 minutes, whichever is sooner. The 45-minute ceiling is therefore a pragmatic safeguard to balance patient safety with system resilience, though it can increase corridor care and crowding pressures within EDs.

These figures highlight a significant systemic issue affecting patient flow and ambulance availability, with extreme delays at some sites creating substantial operational pressures and potential risks to patient safety.

Kettering General Hospital and Northampton General Hospital now operate under the United Hospitals of Northamptonshire (UHN). The EMAS senior leadership team in Northamptonshire has established a strong collaborative relationship with the senior team at UHN and the Integrated Care Board (ICB).

This partnership ensures we work closely to manage risk across both acute sites, as well as for patients waiting in the community.

Within the Northamptonshire division, the Trust are now implementing dynamic strategic conveyance on a daily basis, directing patients to hospitals outside their usual catchment area when necessary. This approach helps mitigate the impact of excessive handover delays at pressured acute sites, reducing lost time and enabling crews to return promptly to attend patients in the community.

The Trust continues to work in close partnership with the Acute Trust, the ICB, and NHS England to implement the 45-minute handover protocol. While an exact implementation date has not yet been confirmed with the Acute Trust, we are actively progressing toward a target of mid-December 2025. To support this, weekly implementation meetings facilitated by NHS England commenced on 27th November, ensuring collaborative oversight and alignment across Northamptonshire.

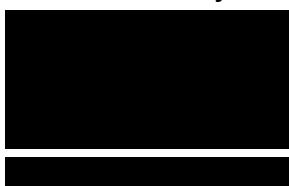
The Trust proactively initiates 'rapid handover' requests during periods of high demand, particularly when multiple hospital handover delays coincide with uncovered Category 2 emergency calls. These actions are guided by our 'Managing Delays in the Safe Handover of Patients' Standard Operating Procedure, which incorporates a series of triggers aligned with the NHSE Midlands Region agreed process.

Requests for rapid and immediate handover requests are recorded by our 24/7 on duty command teams, captured within our daily operational log. This supports the triggering of further escalation actions that may be required should these handover request be declined by the hospital.

Our priority is to provide safe, high-quality care for our patients. We're working closely with system partners to reduce the impact of delays on patients and staff, including implementing the national 45-minute maximum ambulance handover time standard.

I trust this response provides you with clear assurance of our unwavering commitment to reducing hospital handover delays and driving continuous improvement across our services.

Yours sincerely



Chief Executive