

## **Inquest touching the death of Sophie Towle**

### **Response of Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths**

This is the organisational response from Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (SFH) to the Regulation 28: Report To Prevent Future Deaths issued by HM Coroner, following the conclusion of the inquest touching the death of Miss Sophie Towle.

We offer our condolences to Miss Towle's family, and we hope this response, the new guideline for the management of deliberately inserted foreign bodies and the introduction of a Mental Health Inpatient Transfer to an Acute Hospital – Hospital Passport provides reassurance that the Trust recognises and acknowledges its failings and is committed to ensuring that we learn from this to prevent future deaths.

The two matters of concern raised within the report which relate to SFH (points 1 and 4) and responses for each point are as follows:

#### **1) Lack of joint agency policy/cross-sector working between physical and mental health trusts in relation to the insertion of foreign bodies**

During the Inquest it was acknowledged that there is no embedded mechanism for arranging a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meeting between the psychiatric team (Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust) and the physical health team (Sherwood Forest Hospital). In addition, the inquest highlighted that there was no clinical documentation or guidance for staff which prompts physical health staff to consider an MDT approach.

In response to these findings, a series of cross-organisational meetings were convened between Sherwood Forest Hospital and Nottinghamshire Healthcare, facilitated by the Governance Support Unit. The purpose of these meetings was to explore methods by which both organisations could work collaboratively, specifically in relation to patients who have deliberately inserted foreign bodies, as well as other patient cohorts who may require input from both the psychiatric and physical health teams.

During these discussions, the implementation of the "Mental Health Inpatient Transfer to an Acute Hospital – Hospital Passport", which was already in development by the Sherwood Forest Hospital's Mental Health Specialist Nurse, was considered. It was agreed that this passport would be utilised for all inpatient mental health transfers from Nottinghamshire Healthcare to Sherwood Forest Hospital. The aim is to improve communication with Emergency Department colleagues and the discharging team, where appropriate.

The Mental Health Inpatient Transfer to an Acute Hospital – Hospital Passport includes contact details for key locations, which staff have identified as beneficial for facilitating

effective communication. Both organisations have reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing communication between the Trusts. The Governance Support Unit at Sherwood Forest Hospital have agreed to organise a meeting at the end of February 2026 with Nottinghamshire Healthcare to review implementation of the Mental Health Inpatient Transfer to an Acute Hospital – Hospital Passport. A 3-month review date has been agreed due to the low numbers of mental health patients requiring transfer to acute services. The aim of the review meeting is to collaboratively discuss usability of the passport and provide an opportunity to discuss any challenges which have been identified and identify any further actions or amendments required.

In addition to the introduction of the passport, the new guideline for management of patients with deliberately inserted foreign bodies, as detailed in part 2 of the response, has been developed. These procedures provide clear guidance regarding the circumstances in which an MDT is required, specify the team responsible for arranging the meeting, and reflect a shared commitment from both organisations to ensure that MDT discussions are undertaken in order to safeguard our patients.

#### **4) The policy and procedures around the management of insertion of foreign objects for SFH**

During the Inquest proceedings HM Coroner reported that the standard operating procedure (SOP) for the management of deliberately inserted foreign bodies content was lacking in specificity, had vague language which was open to interpretation and did not provide clear advice to medical professionals accessing it for guidance. HM Coroner also acknowledged that there was no reference to consultation with mental health services.

Upon conclusion of the Inquest, a comprehensive review of the SOP for deliberately inserted foreign bodies, as initially presented to HM Coroner, was undertaken. This review was conducted with the support and oversight of the Governance Support Unit to ensure rigorous examination and improvement of the procedure.

As a direct outcome of the review process, the previous SOP for the management of deliberately inserted foreign bodies has been archived. In its place, a new, approved guideline has been developed to address the concerns raised by HM Coroner. This guideline provides clear, concise, and practical guidance to clinical staff and incorporates recommendations to ensure specificity and clarity.

Furthermore, the guideline incorporates a flowchart designed to assist clinical staff by offering clear advice regarding the minimum circumstances for contacting mental health services. Additionally, Appendix A contains the referenced document entitled "Mental Health Inpatient Transfer to an Acute Hospital – Hospital Passport." Which will promote communication between physical and psychological health teams.

The development of the new guideline was informed by a robust consultation process, which included input from key stakeholders across Trauma and Orthopaedics, the

Emergency Department, Safeguarding, and Nottinghamshire Healthcare. This collaborative approach ensured that expert advice and perspectives from all relevant disciplines were considered. In addition, Nottinghamshire Healthcare's Trust wide Procedure for the Management of Foreign Bodies (2023) was reviewed to ensure there was no discrepancy in advice being provided.

On 28th November 2025, the document entitled "Management of Deliberately Inserted Foreign Bodies Guideline" was formally ratified at the Surgery, Anaesthetics and Critical Care Divisional Governance meeting. The final approved guideline is now available on the Trust intranet for clinicians to access and has been disseminated to all staff directly involved in the management of patients presenting with deliberately inserted foreign bodies.

The Trust is committed to ongoing improvement of clinical guidance and ensuring the highest standards of patient care. We are confident that the new guideline addresses the issues identified by HM Coroner and provides comprehensive support to clinical teams managing these complex cases.