

[REDACTED]

Date: 5 January 2026

Private & Confidential

Alison Mutch
Senior Coroner for the area of Manchester South
Coroner's Court
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG

[REDACTED]

Dear Alison

Re: Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths – Margaret Crooks

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report dated 14 November 2025 regarding the sad death of Margaret Crooks. On behalf of NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care (NHS GM), We would like to begin by offering our sincere condolences to Margaret's family for their loss.

Thank you for highlighting your concerns during the inquest which concluded on the 10 November 2025. On behalf of NHS GM, we apologise that you have had to bring these matters of concern to our attention. We recognise it is very important to ensure we make the necessary improvements to the quality and safety of future services.

During the inquest you identified the following cause for concern: -

The Inquest was told that Greater Manchester has a stroke network. In essence there are 3 hospitals that are stroke centres, and that Stepping Hill is one of them. However, under the system overnight (after 11.30pm) Salford Royal provides all expert stroke input into the other 2 centres. This is because the assessment of need has identified that the presence of stroke provision overnight at the other 2 centres is not justified by the demand. During the course of the inquest there appeared to be some confusion amongst some of the stroke clinicians who support the work as to the level of support that was to be provided by Salford Royal overnight to Stepping Hill. This creates a risk that expert and complex advice is not given as quickly as necessary. The evidence was that many of the decisions in relation to how to deal with complications arising from thrombolysis in a stroke patient need to be made by a stroke consultant and are time critical. In Mrs. Crooks case the evidence of the stroke team was that they would have expected the overnight team based at Salford to have advised the Stepping Hill medical team to start giving treatment before the transfer to Salford Royal. The advice whilst Mrs. Crooks was at Stepping Hill appears

to have been given by the stroke Registrar at Salford rather than with input from the stroke consultant. In Mrs. Cooks' case it could not be confirmed that the outcome would have been different if she had received earlier treatment or there had been input earlier from a stroke consultant but in other cases a delay could change the outcome.

Greater Manchester benefits from the Greater Manchester Neurorehabilitation & Integrated Stroke Delivery Network (GM NISDN). Launched in October 2021, the Network is a partnership of NHS providers and commissioners of stroke and neurorehabilitation care in the Greater Manchester region, including Eastern Cheshire. The network supports the whole care pathway for stroke whilst focusing on community care for neurorehabilitation patients. The network supports the development of high quality and equitable stroke and community neurorehabilitation services in Greater Manchester, to achieve the best outcomes and experience for patients.

Hyper acute care within Greater Manchester is commissioned as a hub and spoke model - the hub being the Comprehensive Stroke Centre (CSC) based at Salford Royal operating 24/7 and spokes being Acute Stroke Centres (ASC) at Fairfield General and Stepping Hill Hospitals who both operate 6.45 am – 10.45 pm only. The CSC service specification outlines how patients can access care and support, with the CSC operating out of hours care when the ASCs are closed.

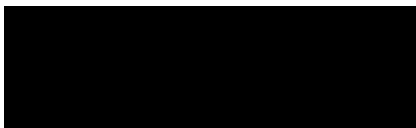
On receipt of your Regulation 28 Report, the Network has:

- Reviewed the currently approved Comprehensive Stroke Centre (CSC) service specification (attached with this letter) that Salford Royal Hospital (part of Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust) is commissioned to provide for the region. The specification has been in place since 2015 when the region re-organised its hyper acute stroke care pathway.
- Reviewed the current Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) between CSCs and the other Greater Manchester stroke centres that details the protocol to be followed in terms of provision of hyper acute advice out of hours.

On review, it is evident that information for clinicians could be improved. In order to ensure complete clarity for clinicians involved in seeking and providing specialist advice in future, the network proposes adding further detail in the current SOP as to what constitutes specialist stroke advice. Discussions are underway to agree the amended wording which will be formally approved via the network's governance. We anticipate this will be completed by the end of February 2026, when we will report again to you with updated information.

I trust this information is useful. Please contact me should you require further information.

Best wishes



MBcHB MRCGP DRCOG DFFP PGCGPE
Chief Medical Officer
Caldicott Guardian
NHS Greater Manchester

Encs:

GM NISDN Comprehensive Stroke Centre (CSC) service specification



GM inpatient service
specs incl TIA MOD1 \