



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

  
*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Women's Health and Mental Health*

39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

  
HM Coroner Anna Loxton  
HM Coroner's Court Surrey  
Station Approach  
Woking GU22 7AP

9 February 2026

Dear Ms Loxton,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 14 November 2025 sent to the Department of Health and Social Care about the death of Suzanne Julia Ellerby. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for Patient Safety, Women's Health and Mental Health.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Suzanne's death and I offer my sincere condolences to their family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are very concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in responding to this matter. Thank you for the additional time provided to the department to provide a response to the concerns raised in the report.

The report raises concerns over vulnerable patients often being transferred back to primary care by secondary mental health services for their onward care, which is affected by way of a discharge letter. Your concern was that NHS England has not provided any guidance in respect of expectations for follow up by primary care services when this transfer of care takes place. As such, the onus is on vulnerable patients to ensure they follow up their care with their GP, without any safety netting in place should they fail to do so.

In preparing this response, my officials have made enquiries with NHS England to ensure we adequately address your concerns.

NHS England has assured the Department that they continue to support local systems to improve the quality, safety and continuity of care for people with mental health needs who require support from secondary mental health services. As part of this work, NHS England has developed draft guidance, the Personalised Care Framework, which sets out the core expectations for care and support for people accessing NHS-commissioned community mental health, crisis and inpatient services, as well as those receiving support through integrated primary care and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. This guidance has been shared in draft form with systems to support early adoption.

The Personalised Care Framework sets out core principles, including that people using specialist mental health services should have a care and support plan that is kept up to date and reflects their needs at that time; that there should be a clearly identified professional within the service with responsibility for the individual's care and support plan and for developing a trusted therapeutic relationship; and that care and support plans should be reviewed when circumstances change. The framework also makes clear that individuals should be able to re-access support promptly where their mental health deteriorates, including following a period of stability.

The guidance further emphasises the responsibility of services to support safe and effective transitions, including between secondary and primary care. Where a person is transferring away from a service, the transferring service is expected to be satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place and that the receiving service is ready to continue delivery of the care and support plan.

In relation to your second concern, where secondary mental health services consider that there may be a risk that a patient will not engage with primary care, services should take appropriate steps to follow the patient up and support their engagement. Patients with significant ongoing risk should not be discharged solely to primary care, and decisions about discharge should be informed by individual clinical judgement and personalised risk assessment, rather than the application of rigid criteria.

As set out above, the Personalised Care Framework also makes clear that people who have received specialist mental health support should be able to re-access help quickly when needed, including where their mental health deteriorates or where they have been transferred between services. The guidance further highlights the importance of involving family members or carers, where appropriate, in the development of care and support plans. These plans should include clear information on what to do if a person's mental health worsens, including how to access appropriate support and the signs that may indicate a potential relapse.

Thank you for bringing these important patient safety issues to my attention and please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any further information.

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

