

Date: 1 May 2026



Kent and Medway Coroners Service
Oakwood House
Oakwood Park
Maidstone
Kent
ME16 8AE

People Directorate (Children and Adults)
Medway Council
Gun Wharf
Dock Road
Chatham
Kent, ME4 4TR

Dear Catherine Wood,

Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths Mr Liam Andrew Sutton

We acknowledge the concerns by the Coroner under Regulation 28 and recognise the serious implications for patient safety arising from delayed admission and discharge pressures within the acute hospital setting. Medway Council fully accepts its responsibilities within the system and continues to be committed to taking appropriate action, both in the immediate term and over the longer term.

System Factors Contributing to Delay

At any given time, delays in discharge are not wholly attributable to adult social care or community health services. Evidence across Medway demonstrates that delays arise from a combination of interdependent factors across the health and social care system. These include acute hospital internal flow, bed availability, discharging planning processes, clinical decision making and escalation arrangements, alongside capacity constraints in community and social care provision.

While the acute trust has implemented a range of measures to improve patient flow, it would not be accurate to conclude that all possible internal actions have been exhausted. Improvements continue at a system interface level, and this position is recognised across partners and underpins the ongoing whole system oversight arrangements described below.

Oversight and Assurance

Due to the persistent challenges with patient flow at Medway Foundation Trust, the local health & social care system has been supported by oversight through the Discharge and Admissions Group (DAG).

The DAG is commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care to work with some of the most challenged systems to support improvement. It provides practical support and constructive challenge on discharge performance, admissions and patient flow; and includes the acute trust, ICB, community providers and the local authority within its remit, reflecting the shared system responsibility.

In addition, the system has been supported by the DHSC commissioned Better Care Fund support programme, which provides sector led, whole system improvement support to strengthen integrated discharge arrangements, patient flow and the effective use of health and social care capacity.

Actions Taken and in Progress

Commissioning action: The council has recommissioned the Integrated Care and Reablement Service (ICRS). This will increase community health bed capacity to support discharge from acute care.

Commissioning action: The council has commissioned 8 assessment beds to enable people who are ready to be discharged but not quite ready to go home to receive therapy and support them to independence.

Commissioning action: The council has introduced 24-hour care at home to enable people who have high care and support needs to go home, rather than to a care home where it is safe and appropriate.

Market engagement: The council has recruited an independent commissioner to work with private care providers to better understand why they are not accepting residents who are ready to be discharged from hospital, to determine how we can increase residential and nursing home capacity, particularly for people with complex needs.

System Leadership: A single care co-ordinator for hospital discharge has been appointed to operate on a system basis and reports directly to the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) providing strategic oversight, coordination and escalation across organisational boundaries and to the Chief Operating Officer at Medway Foundation Trust from an operational perspective.

Sourcing Care: Medway Council has created a dedicated brokerage team to find care for people ready to be discharged from hospital and community health settings. This means that the team is not balancing the need to source care for people in the community at the same time.

Long term capacity development: Medway Council is progressing through the governance process to develop an 80-bed care home, recognising ongoing system challenges. While a longer-term intervention, this reflects the Council's seriousness in addressing structural capacity constraints.

Conclusion

Partners across the system recognise that improvement is required and that the risks identified arise from whole system pressures. This is reflected in the Discharge and Admissions Group arrangements, which include the acute trust within their remit, alongside a programme of immediate and longer-term action to improve flow, capacity and patient safety.

Yours sincerely



Director of People (Statutory DCAS) & Deputy Chief Executive