NHS England

Ms Joanne Andrews,
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7 July 2026

Dear Ms Andrews,

Re: Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths – David John Smart who died on 14th June 2025.

Thank you for your Report to Prevent Future Deaths (hereafter "Report") dated 22nd May 2026 concerning the death of David John Smart on 14th June 2025. In advance of responding to the specific concerns raised in your Report, I would like to express my deep condolences to Mr Smart's family and loved ones. NHS England is keen to assure the family and yourself that the concerns raised about Mr Smart's care have been listened to and reflected upon.

Your Report raises concerns that corridors are being used to treat patients when hospitals have reached capacity across the country. You were concerned that corridor care was raised as a concern in two Prevention of Future Death Reports from December 2022 and February 2025 yet the issue continues to be a concern.

NHS England is clear that corridors are not designated clinical areas and their use for patient care is a symptom of significant system pressure rather than planned practice.

Since your previous Reports to us, the NHS England Urgent and Emergency Care Plan for 2025/26 has been published (in June 2025) and supported by the Medium-Term Planning Framework, which sets out a national expectation that systems take coordinated action to eliminate corridor care by improving end-to-end patient flow, reducing avoidable hospital congestion and improving timely discharge from hospital.

Alongside this, NHS England has been and continues to support providers and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to improve internal hospital flow through faster senior clinical decision-making, increased use of same day emergency care and virtual wards, and more effective management of patient pathways. The plan also aims to reduce demand on emergency departments through improved access to community and primary care alternatives and strengthened admission avoidance pathways, so that patients can be assessed and treated in the most appropriate setting.

A key element of improving patient flow is reducing delays in discharging patients who no longer require acute hospital treatment. Delayed discharges contribute to high bed occupancy, reducing capacity for emergency admissions and increasing pressure on emergency departments. NHS England is supporting providers and ICBs to strengthen

discharge processes, including through the consistent use of criteria-led discharge and discharge to assess models. NHS England is also developing “Model Discharge” guidance to support trusts in reducing delays and improving patient flow.

NHS England recognises that, despite these actions, corridor care is still used in exceptional circumstances in some providers when emergency departments are under sustained capacity pressure. This is primarily to enable ambulances to be released rapidly from hospitals, to address increased risk in the community. This reflects wider system flow challenges, including constrained bed capacity, delayed discharges and limited community care availability.

To strengthen oversight and drive improvement, NHS England is working through regional teams to provide targeted support to systems experiencing the highest levels of flow pressure. From May 2026, the routine publication of corridor care data has begun, increasing transparency and enabling more focused intervention where risks to patient safety are greatest.

I would also like to provide further assurances on the national NHS England work taking place around the Reports to Prevent Future Deaths. All reports received are discussed by the Regulation 28 Working Group, comprising Regional Medical Directors, and other clinical and quality colleagues from across the regions. This ensures that key learnings and insights around events, such as the sad death of Mr Smart, are shared across the NHS at both a national and regional level and helps us to pay close attention to any emerging trends that may require further review and action.

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.

Yours sincerely,

National Medical Director
NHS England