

10 OCT 2015

Tel: 01603 421102
Fax: 01603 421118

Our ref.ml/mp

2 October 2015

Ms J Lake
HM Coroner
Norfolk Coroner's Service
69-75 Thorpe Road
Norwich
Norfolk
NR1 1UA

Dear Ms Lake

Regulation 28 report following the inquest of Mr Thomas Thurling

I write in response to your report dated 6 August 2015. Under paragraph 7, Schedule 5, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 you requested the Trust consider issues of service delivery following the conclusion of the inquest into the death of Mr Thomas Thurling on 28 July 2015.

You identified three matters of concern. I will address these in order:

Monitoring of medication changes

You identified concern regarding the systems and process employed to monitor the efficacy and safety of medication following a change in prescription. You highlighted that other key people in Mr Thurling's care were unaware of the change and how they could contribute to monitoring. Additionally, the Trust's staff member had planned and unplanned leave, further contributing to the situation.

The Trust recognises that changes in medication are a significant stage in an individual's treatment and require monitoring in order to ensure it is having anticipated effects and be ready to respond to possible side effects.

In considering the means by which to ensure this practice is consistent, no single action will provide assurance. Recognising the task involves technical knowledge of medication and an understanding of the need to communication to the wider group of people involved in supporting the service user, we are sharing the issue with a range of leads in specific areas, such as the Pharmacy and those leading the implementation of Triangle of Care, as well as clinical teams. They will use this direction to cascade learning.

Further, the matter will be raised directly with clinical staff via internal communications and clinical forums.



Chair: Gary E Page
Chief Executive: Michael Scott
Trust Headquarters: Hellesdon Hospital,
Drayton High Road, Norwich, NR6 5BE
Tel: 01603 421421 Fax: 01603 421440 www.nsftr.nhs.uk



Ms Lake

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Positively, many of our inpatient services have processes in place where the Pharmacy directly assist with providing information on medication to service users and their families. They also host a medicines information helpline which is available for service users and carers to use.

The most direct means by which the Trust will know it is consistently involving all parties in communication of changes to the service user's treatment is through measures such the patient survey, incident reporting and complaints. The Trust will monitor specifically for this type of report taking remedial action where required.

Care Coordinator and staffing

I have linked your second and third matters of concern because they overlap. You registered concern at the arrangements to cover planned and unplanned absence of staff and how this contributes to the experience and safety for service users.

In respect of cover for planned and unplanned absence of staff, the Trust has guidance for clinical teams to follow. This involves contacting the service user in order to assess the need for alternative arrangements i.e. a colleague completing visits and contacts. Clinical services have been directed to consider how they are consistently meeting this guidance with feedback and further direction via the Trust's Quality Governance Committee.

In addition to these arrangements, the Trust's community services employ a duty worker system, which means that a member of staff from the team will always be available for service users or family to contact. They can respond to issues requiring urgent action or pass information to the care coordinator.

Contributing to the ability to apply this guidance is the staffing levels within a team, with some areas experiencing significant pressures. The Trust is taking active steps to recruit to these areas but we have found our experiences and challenges are shared across the health sector. The Trust is taking steps to mitigate the risks by employing temporary staffing for defined periods of time. This supports an element of consistency, however, our priority is to fill our vacancies with permanent staff. This is an area of focus for the Trust's Executive and your concern mirrors ours.

Thank you for bringing the matters to the Trust's attention. If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Michael Scott
Chief Executive



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