

Avon and Wiltshire 
Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

Peter Harrowing
Assistant Coroner
The Coroner's Court
The Courthouse
Old Weston Road
Flax Bourton
BS48 1UL

Chief Executive's Office
Jenner House
Langley Park
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SN15 1GG
Tel:(01249) 468023

06 October 2016

Dear Dr Harrowing

I am writing in response to the Prevention of Future Death report you issued to this Trust following the inquest into the death of Rohan Fitzsimons. The work to respond to the improvements you have required is being led by [REDACTED] Associate Director of Nursing (Inpatient and Community) and [REDACTED] Associate Director for Statutory Delivery.

The Trust remains committed to the Principle of Recovery and the role positive risk taking has in risk assessment and care planning, as highlighted in the Department of Health Best Practice on Risk Assessment in Mental Health Services; however it recognises the need for explicit guidance for clinical staff.

The joint protocol for the Management of Missing Persons and Absent Without Leave has been extensively reviewed internally by the Trust. We have identified proposals to simplify this document and to clarify the decision making pathways in relation to people deemed to be at low or medium risk who fail to return from leave at the specified time, to ensure that the procedures are flexible and decisions are based on proportionate responses to each individual's needs and risks.

It is also vital that these revised procedures are practicable both for AWP staff and for the Police, as these are jointly agreed multi-agency procedures. We therefore will be consulting with key inpatient clinicians and the Police Liaison officers for Avon & Somerset and Wiltshire forces this month on the proposed changes to the joint protocol, with the intention to ratify agreed changes by the beginning of November 2016.

The existing policy will remain in place until this work is complete, to ensure the continued collaboration with the local police forces is maintained during this period. Once ratified, we will ensure that the revised joint protocol for the Management of Missing Persons and Absent without Leave is disseminated and understood by ward based staff via a training programme delivered by ward managers.

In relation to the Section 17 procedure, this has been amended to be explicit that a Mental State examination must be undertaken by a registered practitioner, and that leave must be Continued...

Acting Chair
[REDACTED]

Trust Headquarters
Jenner House, Langley Park, Chippenham, SN15 1GG

Chief Executive
Hayley Richards

authorised by that individual prior to the commencement of any leave. Additionally, a standard template to record this information has been developed, and forms part of the amended procedure.

The revised procedure and standard template was subject to consultation with key inpatient staff to ensure that the proposals were considered practical for use by front line staff, and was ratified by the Trust Director of Nursing and Quality. The revised procedure is being currently disseminated to staff through Trust Modern Matrons and Ward Managers.

It is also recognised that merely having amended procedures in place and ensuring staff are informed and trained in the use of the procedures, does not in itself ensure that the changes in practice set out in the procedures are consistently applied in all inpatient wards in the Trust.

Therefore, to provide the necessary assurance that practice is safe and consistently applied to the standards set out in the amended procedures, a regular audit of practice will be undertaken in relation to review of risks for patients who return late from s17 Leave, and of checks and authorisation prior to episodes of leave by registered nurses will be undertaken every Quarter 2016/2017.

In addition continuing compliance with key MHA related standards, including those for s17 Leave, will be subject to on-going dip sampling audit and feedback by a restructured Trust Mental Health Act Administration team as part of the MHA audit schedule for all wards that will be introduced in 2017/2018 to providing on-going assurance.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hayley Richards', written in a cursive style.

Dr Hayley Richards MRCGP, MRCPsych
Chief Executive
Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust