

Campaign to Save Mental Health
Services in Norfolk & Suffolk



Chris Dzikiti
Director of Mental Health, Care Quality Commission

12 February 2024

By Email

From: Campaign to Save Mental Health Services in Norfolk and Suffolk

Dear Chris

Thank you for your response to our letter to Ian Trenholm, Chief Executive of the Care Quality Commission (CQC), 11th December 2023. We are not sure why it took nearly 2 months to reply or why you have not addressed most of our concerns.

Our original letter states:

'We are writing to express our dismay at the collective failure of NHS England, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to carry out your duty of care to the people of Norfolk and Suffolk needing mental health support and treatment. We are shocked at the silence from all your organisations to the Grant Thornton report on the thousands of deaths and the fact that neither Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust (NSFT) nor your organisations' know what those exact figures are. To our knowledge no public comments have been issued and no apologies given by your organisations for your part in this scandal. We believe this is the biggest deaths scandal and crisis in the history of the NHS.'

Whilst you do comment on the fact that NSFT have lost track of the numbers and details of deaths you do not address our central concern at the numbers of deaths 8,440 in 3.4 years – nearly 50 patients/service users a week! That’s why your silence on the sheer numbers of deaths – the biggest deaths crisis in the history of the NHS – doesn’t make sense to us.

We do not understand how the CQC could raise the rating of NSFT from ‘inadequate’ to ‘requires improvement’ in February 2023 when all our indications were that NSFT was becoming more, not less dysfunctional as an organisation.

Our concerns are:

- NSFT negotiated Grant Thornton to change the report through 3 drafts from February 2023 to remove critical observations about the poor governance at the trust – see Newsnight investigation:

<https://norfolksuffolkmentalhealthcrisis.org.uk/newsnight-investigation-of-nsfts-mortality-review-also-reveals-editing-out-of-leadership-criticism-continuation-of-cover-up-culture-and-culture-of-fear-statement-from-authors-of-forever-gone/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-66086388>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-66811242>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/jan/21/mental-health-trust-deaths#:~:text=A%20report%20on%20Newsnight%20said,help%20from%20a%20PR%20firm.>

These negotiations delayed publication of the report until June 2023.

- 140 clinical staff employed by NSFT wrote a letter of no confidence in the board August 2022: <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/health/20615225.140-doctors-write-letter-saying-lack-confidence-nhs-trust/>

NSFT spent £850,000 on an external PR company, on top of their already substantial Comms department, to convince the CQC that things were improving whilst nearly 50 patients/service users die every week. However, CQC inspectors did not meet with the campaign members who are bereaved families and patients, service users, staff and carers. All previous inspections had included meetings with us:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-67307312>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-67706751>

It is for these reasons we want to meet with you to understand your processes and procedures for previous and future inspections. Unfortunately, the experiences of campaign members during this period have led us to mistrust the CQC judgement. Political expediency considerations seem to have replaced objective inspection.

We also don't understand why you have never used your health and safety executive powers to prosecute NSFT over the many unsafe practices that have led to patient deaths. These include:

Peggy Copeman: <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/23959981.fury-nhss-area-placement-woman-70s/>

Lewis Begley: <https://www.eveningnews24.co.uk/news/health/23026583.hospital-patient-overdosed-twice-gaining-access-medicine-store/>

<https://www.eveningnews24.co.uk/news/health/21397753.hospital-patient-died-overdose-suffered-neglect-jury-finds/>

We repeat again that patients, service users, family members, carers and bereaved relatives, of which there are far too many, are demanding an immediate independent statutory public inquiry and the replacement of the senior management team and Board of NSFT with a functioning team/organisation. We are demanding that Ministers, NHSE and DHSC disband NSFT and replace with a functioning and coproduced mental health service with an injection of funds to restore frontline community services closed in the disastrous radical redesign and enough beds to meet need.

We require the CQC to involve and take evidence from Campaign members and supporters during future inspections.

We look forward to your response and options for dates for you to meet with campaign members.

Campaign Committee