

Leader and Cabinet Office**Cllr Lucia das Neves**

Cabinet Member for Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing



15 August 2023

Frances O'Callaghan
Chief Executive for the NHS (ICB) for North Central London
North Central London Integrated Care System
Laycock PDC, Laycock Street
London N1 1TH

Sent by email to: frances.o'callaghan@nhs.net

cc: Amanda Pritchard, CEO – NHS England, Rachel Lissauer, Director – North Central London CCG, Cassie Williams, CEO - The Haringey GP Federation.

Dear Francis

I am writing to express my deep concern following the preventable death of Emily Chesterton, and the wider use of physician associates (PAs) in medical practices.

Emily died after being seen by a PA at the Vale Practice in Crouch End in October 2022 and November 2022. The PA, who Emily mistakenly believed was a GP, diagnosed Emily first with a sprained ankle and then when she returned with additional symptoms of shortness of breath and a hot swollen leg, she was prescribed anxiety medication.

At her inquest in March, the coroner concluded that the poor quality care given to Emily by the PA contributed to her death. After presenting with her symptoms, Emily "should have been immediately referred to a hospital emergency unit" where she likely would have been treated for a pulmonary embolism and would have survived.

A serious incident review by the practice found that Emily was never told she was not speaking with a GP. Furthermore, Vale Practice states that patients should not see a PA twice for the same condition. Practice guidelines make it clear that PAs cannot currently prescribe, with any prescriptions needing to be signed off by a supervising GP. In this case, practice guidelines were not followed, and this led to the tragic and preventable death of a young woman.

While it is of some reassurance that the Vale Practice has stopped employing PAs, this case raises serious questions about the use of PAs in the NHS more widely. I am concerned about the level of oversight PAs are subject to in practices across the borough and the country.

I am aware that the Department of Health and Social Care has now closed its consultation on new regulation to expand the role of PAs, to "relieve pressure on GPs and improve

access to services.” With the current shortage of GPs, it seems likely that we will see PAs relied upon more heavily to undertake the work of GPs.

I am seeking reassurances both locally and nationally that the use of PAs will be closely regulated, and that lessons will be learned from the events that led to Emily’s tragic death.

On behalf of the local authority and our residents, I am requesting detail on the following:

- 1) Information on advice and training that has been provided to PAs and how this is funded locally;
- 2) What actions will be taken locally in response to the conclusions drawn by the coroner in Emily’s case;
- 3) In light of Emily’s case, how will the ICB and partners in health work better to inform and reassure residents about the role of PAs;
- 4) How will the ICB and partners increase the awareness of the signs and warnings of deep vein thrombosis (DVT), pulmonary embolisms and similar life-threatening conditions? Please provide details on the funding and timescale for this work.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lucia das Neves', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cllr Lucia das Neves

Cabinet Member for Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing