

Witness Name: Dr Jessica Sokolov

Statement No.: WITN0364001

Dated: 19 December 2025

NOTTINGHAM INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF

DR JESSICA SOKOLOV

I, Jessica Sokolov, of NHS England, Wellington House, 133-135 Waterloo Road, London, SE1 8UG, will say as follows:

Throughout this process my thoughts have been and continue to be with all those affected. What happened to Ian Coates, Barnaby Webber, and Grace O'Malley-Kumar, as well as to Wayne Birkett, Marcin Gawronski, and Sharon Miller should never have happened, and I'm keen to help the inquiry in any way I can, so that all possible lessons are learned and we can reduce the risk of these awful events being repeated in the future.

1. I make this statement to adopt and attest to the following parts of NHS England's Corporate Witness Statement dated 8 December 2025 **[WITN0310001]**:
 - a. Section 1, paragraphs 93 to 96 (Responsible Officers);
 - b. Section 1, paragraphs 139 to 159 (Providers of Mental Health Services);
 - c. Section 1, paragraphs 160 to 165 (Provider Collaboratives);
 - d. Section 1, paragraphs 166 to 167 (Use of Independent Sector Hospitals);
 - e. Section 5 (NHS England engagement with Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust);
 - f. Section 6 (Incident Response); and
 - g. Annex 2 in respect of the Improvement Oversight and Assurance Group, the Regional Quality and Performance Oversight Meeting, Regional Support Group and the Midlands Independent Investigations Review Group (Key Mental Health Groups).

Career and experience

2. I am the Medical Director for NHS England Midlands Region. I was substantively appointed to this role in January 2024, having been the interim Medical Director since 2022. Prior to this appointment, in 2020 I was appointed as the Medical Director for System Improvement and Professional Standards for the Midlands Region, with responsibilities relating to the West Midlands in particular. For the first 12 to 18 months my focus was on the Covid-19 pandemic response.
3. As part of my role as the Medical Director I am:
 - a. a member of the Regional Executive team, reporting directly to the Regional Director with collective responsibility to deliver the whole of the NHS England agenda for the Midlands Region;
 - b. executive lead for the Region for Freedom to Speak up; and
 - c. Higher Level Responsible Officer for the Region (meaning all Responsible Officers in Provider organisations are connected to me for appraisal, revalidation, and professional standards purposes). I also have oversight of tier 1 Responsible Officer function for primary care.
4. My Medical Directorate leads for the Midlands Region on Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism, Primary Care Transformation, Long Term Condition management, and Prevention.
5. My team manages Regulation 28 requests (Prevention of Future Death report responses to Area Coroners, following an Inquest into a death), oversight or mortality and safety, and the clinical senates for the Midlands, as well as multi-disciplinary clinical leadership across the Region.

6. Working with the Regional Chief Nurse, I am one of two executive leads for safety and quality, and co-chair the Regional, Quality Group and Regional Joint Strategic Oversight Group (which oversees NHS Trusts in segment 4 of the National Oversight Framework and Recovery Support Programme).
7. At the time of the commission of the Independent Mental Health Homicide Report into the treatment of Valdo Calocane ("**VC**"), I was the Executive lead for independent mental health homicide investigations in the Region. This has since moved to the responsibility of the Regional Chief Nursing Officer's team within the Region. In practice, this meant that I received a recommendation to commission a review and was then involved in the governance relating to the investigation [**NHSE0000423**]. In this case I received and approved the recommendation that Theemis Consulting Ltd undertake the review. I had oversight of development of the terms of reference and the engagement with interested parties with regard to these and the progress of the review [**NHSE0000458**]. I was involved in decisions relating to publication, working within the framework set by NHS England nationally in response to the broader legal framework relating to confidentiality. The Theemis report is exhibited at [**NHSE0000298**].
8. I am also a member of the Regional Support Group, which is the forum where Providers are recommended by the Region for entry to /exit from the Recovery Support Programme (the decision is approved nationally). I am co-chair (with the Chief Executive of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board) of the Improvement Oversight and Assurance Group, which is the group by which we monitor Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's

progress against the improvement plan. As part of this work I liaise with national colleagues to update them on progress.

9. Prior to joining NHS England I worked as a salaried GP in Stoke before becoming a GP partner in 2010, a position I held until 2018.
10. In 2015 I became a part-time Clinical Director at Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group, leading transformation projects relating to maternity and community-based care, and then took on a full time Medical Director post in the same organisation in 2018.
11. I am a medical doctor having graduated from the University of Leicester in 2003 (MBChB). I have held training grade medical posts across a number of services (including medicine, anaesthetics, Emergency Medicine, Psychiatry, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Care of the Elderly) across Shropshire, Telford, and North Wales before gaining my Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners in 2009. During this time I also gained the Diploma of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Reflections

12. Having reflected on the tragic events of 13 June 2023, I have provided my thoughts in terms of further considerations and recommendations below.
13. Having a shared understanding of risk, across inpatient and outpatient teams within health settings, but also across health and housing, for instance, and having the ability to update this when events in individual settings occur, is extremely important in identifying patterns of behaviour or identifying deterioration and might be worth exploring as an area for improvement.

14. One of the key areas for future work should be around family and carer involvement and engagement. This is not straightforward, as not all patients will want their involvement, be well enough to decline it, or even have families for support. However, it is clear that the people who knew VC best raised concerns about him on numerous occasions, and while Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust have done a lot of work on improving family and carer engagement, it may be this is an area for concerted focus across the NHS as a whole.
15. The Chair will be aware of the findings of the Independent Investigation commissioned by NHS England into this case, and the work done to disseminate learning across the NHS. It could be useful to consider whether we have the best approach to ensuring all Trusts understand and are able to respond to learning from these investigations (when they do not pertain to their own organisation) so that the NHS as a whole has the best chance to improve.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed: **GRO-B**

Dated: 19 December 2025

Index to First Witness Statement of Dr Jessica Solokov

| No. | Inquiry URN | Document Description |
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| 1 | WITN0310001 | First Witness Statement of Dale Bywater on behalf of NHS England |
| 2 | NHSE0000423 | Briefing Note for Mette Vognsen Head of Independent Investigations Midland Region dated 05/02/2024 |
| 3 | NHSE0000458 | Post family meeting Final Terms of Reference, independent Investigation into the care and treatment provided by the NHS Mental Health Services, Primary Care, and Partner organisations to VC 2023-11918, NHS England |
| 4 | NHSE0000298 | Report dated January 2025, compiled by Theemis Consulting Ltd, Re: Independent investigation into the care and treatment provided to VC |