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Our Ref: FOI.22.154

Dr Minh Alexander

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1 July 2022

Dear Dr Alexander

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information Request

Thank you for your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act which was received on 31 May 2022. I can confirm that we have provided part of the information requested and we are not able to provide all the information you have requested for the reasons given below. You asked the following questions, reproduced in **bold** below:

FOI request on AuditOne report, Seacare Committee, task-and-finish group.

Please disclose:

1. A copy of the AuditOne report mentioned in the Sunday Times article of 21 May 2022.

<https://minhalexander.files.wordpress.com/2022/05/nhs-ambulance-service-doctored-documents-to-cover-up-truth-about-deaths.pdf>

2. The total cost to the trust of commissioning the AuditOne report.

WorkforceOne service - £15,316.70

3. Please disclose trust documents relevant to the establishment of an internal patient safety committee, Seacare, as reported by the Sunday Times:

"An internal patient safety committee formed by the NEAS in September 2019"...."The stated purpose of this group — known as Seacare — was to review information meant for disclosure to coroners to ensure its “quality, accuracy and objectivity”.

Please include in the disclosure:

- a) the membership of the committee in terms of the roles of the members**
- b) the committee's place within the trust's organisational structure**
- c) the terms of reference of the committee**
- d) the trust director with ultimate responsibility for the committee**

Please also disclose:

e) the number of times that the committee has met since its formation, and whether the committee still operates.

The SEACARE Group met weekly from 18 June 2019 to 1 December 2020 (with two exceptions)
= 75 meetings

f) Any major reports produced by the Committee for the trust board

4. Please disclose the documents relevant to the establishment of the task-and-finish group reported by the Sunday Times.

"Beattie said in 2019 that concerns were raised by staff relating to the "quality and timeliness of documents disclosed to coroners".

He said a "task-and-finish group" was established to address the concerns. "The task-and-finish group was concluded in January 2021 with these actions completed and assurances provided to our board of directors that significant improvement had been achieved," Beattie added".

Please include in the disclosure:

- a) the membership of the task-and-finish group in terms of the roles of the members**
- b) the task-and-finish group's place within the trust's organisational structure**
- c) the terms of reference of the task-and-finish group**
- d) the trust director with ultimate responsibility for the task-and-finish group**

Please also disclose:

e) the number of times that the task-and-finish group met following its formation

The Coronial Task & Finish Group met from 7 May 2020 to 15 January 2021 = 20 meetings

f)) Any major reports produced by the task-and-finish group for the trust board

The qualified person's opinion is that, if the information requested were disclosed, the prejudice/inhibition specified in the following section(s) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 section 36(2)(b)&(c) would occur for the following reason(s):

- Future external reviews may not exercise the candour and frankness required for good decision-making
- Internal discussions on patient care would be inhibited by staff if their discussions were made public.

In addition, the counter arguments put forward in favour of publication will all be addressed by the independent inquiry, instructed to be held by the Secretary of State on 14 June 2022. To publish in advance of the inquiry would prejudice its own actions.

On the basis that these matters will be publicly aired and independently reviewed and published fully after taking account of all views, an exemption is being applied to the unanswered questions in this request. This means that both the inquiry can proceed without prejudice and the decision to publish information and conclusions in the future would be for the independent inquiry to determine.

We are therefore unable to release this information and apply section 36(2)(b)(i)&(ii) and section 36(2)(c) exemptions.

We have applied the exemption at section 36(2)(b)(i)&(ii) and section 36(2)(c) to this information. This exemption states that information is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person, disclosure of the information under the legislation:

- (b) would, or would be likely to, inhibit –
- (i) the free and frank provision of advice, or
- (ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or
- (c) would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

If you are not satisfied with the information we have provided, you can request an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this letter, which will be carried out by Mr Paul Aitken-Fell, who is the Trust's Lead Consultant Paramedic and is someone not involved with your original request.

If you wish to follow this route, please contact karen.greenacre@neas.nhs.uk who will commence the process on your behalf.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome of the review, you can ultimately complain to:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely



Mark Cotton
Freedom of Information Lead