

Priory Healthcare fined following patient death

The company that runs The Priory Hospital has been fined for failing to ensure the safety of patients on the hospital's Emerald Ward following the death of 21-year-old Francesca Whyatt.

Francesca, from Knutsford in Cheshire, was found unconscious at The Priory Hospital in Roehampton, London. She died three days later.

Priory Healthcare has been fined £140,000 after an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Francesca died on 28 September 2013. She had been transferred from a local hospital to the Emerald Ward, a specialist unit at The Priory Hospital, in March 2013.

She was found unconscious in a patient lounge on the top floor of the hospital on 25 September.



Francesca Whyatt

Francesca had managed to make her way to the lounge as the hospital responded to an incident involving other patients and used the tights that she was wearing as a ligature.

An investigation by HSE concluded Priory Healthcare Limited failed to ensure

the provision of in-patient psychiatric treatment was carried out in such a way that patients were not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

Daniel Whyatt, Francesca's brother, said his sister was a "truly selfless [and] special individual."

Daniel said: "The tragic and untimely death of our beloved sister has had a profound impact, and has repercussions well beyond those conceivable to anyone outside of our little family unit. It has invariably ruined all of our lives, and has muddied the precious memories we have of Francesca.

"It is a strange thing to note that it is just as difficult to write her name as it is to speak it, all these years later it is still so raw. We should be able to talk about her fondly, with a smile... instead every mention of her is done so in anger and rage and it feels like being stabbed in the heart.

"It is extremely overwhelming. Francesca had a proclivity for helping everyone she met and changed their lives in positive and meaningful ways, often at her own expense. She was a truly selfless, special and unique individual."

Priory Healthcare Limited, of Hammersmith Road, Hammersmith, London, pleaded guilty to failing to discharge a duty under Section 3(1) Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £140,000 at Southwark Crown Court on 14 November 2023. Costs will be decided at a later date.

Paul Hems, HSE's head of operations for London, said: "This incredibly sad case highlights the need for suitable and sufficient systems to be put in place to monitor patients.

"Employers should be aware that HSE will hold to account those who do not comply with health and safety legislation. It should also be noted that similar incidents which have taken place after April 2015 will be enforced by the Care Quality Commission (CQC)."

/Ends

Notes to Editors:

1. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Following the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry and the publication of the Francis Report, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) was given powers to carry out criminal investigations and bring

prosecutions. These took effect in April 2015. Since that time, in England, the CQC has been the regulator for patient health and safety matters, with HSE regulating health and safety for workers and members of the public. A revised memorandum of understanding reflecting these changes and setting out areas of responsibility was agreed by the two organisations which is available on HSE's website. [MoU between the Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) and HSE](#)