

# SUMMARY

## Statement of Approach

### Investigating illustrative cases of those who have died

*This document explains how the Inquiry will investigate the deaths of mental health inpatients in Essex between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2023.*

*You can read the full [Statement of Approach](#) for more details about how the Inquiry will work to meet its [Terms of Reference](#).*

## How illustrative cases will be chosen by the Inquiry

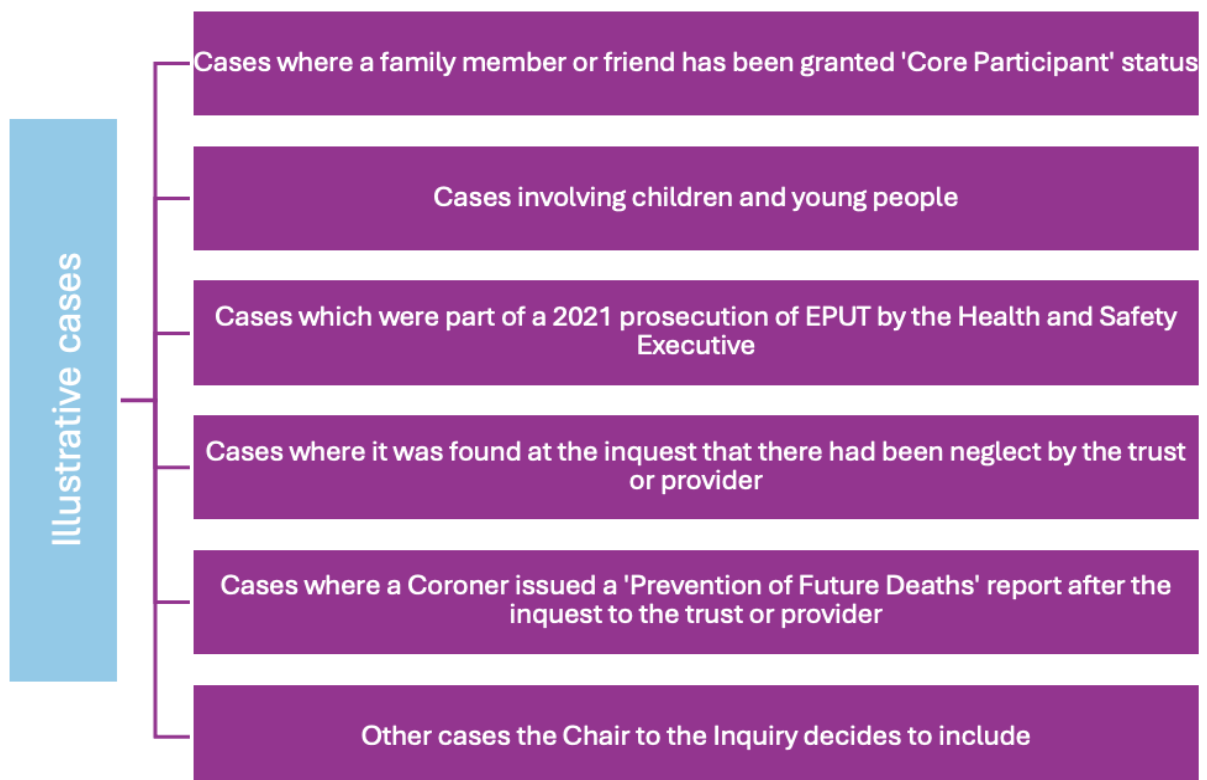
Not all deaths between 2000 and 2023 will be investigated by the Inquiry. Instead, the Inquiry will select a number of deaths (around 145) to investigate. We call these 'illustrative cases'.

This is so the Chair can understand the issues and make recommendations for change as quickly as possible.

In deciding which cases to consider, the Inquiry will look at:

- What evidence is needed to meet the [Terms of Reference](#)
- Different care given by NHS trusts and healthcare providers in Essex
- Different types of patients (such as older adults, young people, and those with additional needs)
- Concerns that have been raised by families engaging with the Inquiry.

The following will be illustrative cases, unless the Chair decides otherwise:



Letters are being sent to bereaved families to let them know that the Inquiry is considering the death of their family member as an illustrative case.

### **How we will consider the illustrative cases**

The Inquiry has a team of people reviewing documents and gathering evidence in relation to the illustrative cases.

The Inquiry will review the evidence received from families, providers, and key individuals and organisations. It will also look at previous investigations and findings, including:

- internal and external reports from the hospital or healthcare provider
- inquests
- criminal proceedings
- findings from regulators, such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC)

All cases are different and the way a case is considered will depend on a number of things. The Inquiry will explore systemic issues and consider failings across the 24-year period under investigation. Where necessary, the team working on these cases will speak to the Inquiry's Independent Assessors and obtain the views of independent experts.

### **How we will consider previous investigations and findings**

The Inquiry will look at previous investigations and findings that are available for each illustrative case.

The Inquiry will also consider new concerns and look at issues across a number of different cases to identify problems with systems or organisations.

The Inquiry will make recommendations to improve future care. The Inquiry cannot make any findings about civil or criminal liability.

## How we will group cases together

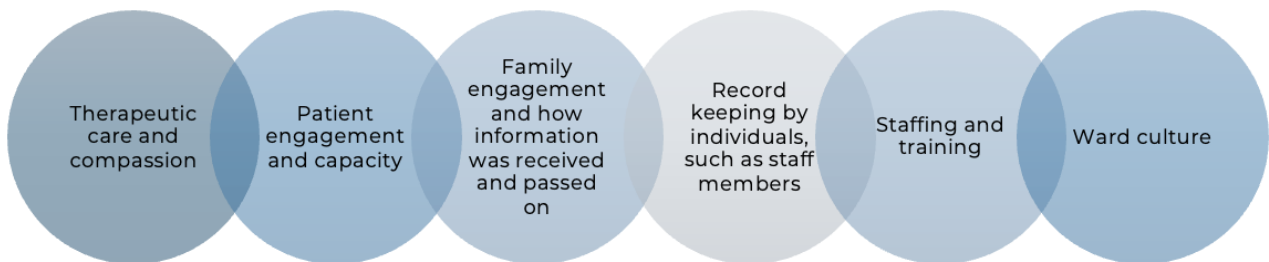
Once enough evidence has been gathered by the Inquiry to understand the issues and themes in the illustrative cases, it will group the cases together by theme. Each group will be known as a 'cluster' of cases.

A case may be considered in more than one cluster.

The issues and themes the Inquiry will consider through each cluster include:

Assessment and admission	Environmental risk and ward safety	Sexual safety
Safeguarding	Observations and the use of technology	Co-occurring health conditions and older adult care
Neurodevelopmental disorders	Substance misuse	Medication
Restraint	Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder / Borderline Personality Disorder	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
Perinatal (pregnancy) care	Leave	Discharge
Information sharing, record keeping systems and inter-agency communication	CQC cases	Culture, candour and accountability (incl. the quality of internal investigations and the falsifying of records)

Across all cases the Inquiry will consider:



### How we will share the illustrative case summaries

Those who are connected to an illustrative case (such as the family of the person, or the NHS Trust) will be provided with a confidential copy of a draft Case Summary by the Inquiry. Copies of any documents referred to in the Summary will also be shared.

Those who are connected to an illustrative case will be able to tell us if they don't agree with anything in the Case Summary, or if there is anything they consider is missing.

When Case Summaries are finalised, they will be shared with others in the case cluster, together with the documents which relate to each case (unless there is a good reason why this cannot be done).

Final Case Summaries (but not the documents) will also be shared with all Core Participants. The Chair will make a decision about to how to share the Case Summaries more widely, but they may be published on the Inquiry website, used at hearings or referred to in the final report.

These different stages of how Case Summaries are shared are shown in the below diagram.



If you have any questions about the Investigative Strategy, please contact the Inquiry Team.

**12 February 2026**