# NELFT faces renewed scrutiny as delays and safety concerns persist despite leadership efforts



The North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT), which provides mental and community health services to around 4.3 million people across London boroughs including Barking & Dagenham, Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Havering, and areas of Essex and Kent, has been criticised by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for needing to improve the quality of its psychiatric units and address ongoing issues concerning risk management and lengthy waiting times.

The CQC inspected several NELFT services between October 2024 and March 2025, focusing notably on specialist mental health services for children and young people in Redbridge. While staff were commended for their kindness, respectfulness, and supportiveness, offering transparent communication and handling complaints appropriately, the report highlighted significant delays faced by patients in accessing care. Patients endure long waits for triage, assessment, and treatment, with some young people even reaching adulthood without having had their initial assessment. Staff reported struggling with high caseloads which contributed to these delays, indicating pressure on resources and capacity in these critical services.

Additionally, the quality rating for acute wards for working-age adults and psychiatric intensive care units was downgraded from 'good' to 'requires improvement,' while general adult health services maintained a 'good' rating. Specific concerns were raised about nursing staff’s recording of incidents involving patient restraints, incomplete risk assessments and care plans for patients’ physical health, and the need for better observation practices and medication tracking. Patients also raised complaints regarding the lack of direct access to snacks and hot drinks, which the trust has pledged to address.

Despite these criticisms, certain positive aspects were noted regarding the psychiatric care units. Nursing staff demonstrated an ability to learn from incidents, improve practices following serious events, and adhere to safeguarding protocols. The wards were visibly clean, with good infection control measures such as regular handwashing and auditing in place.

NELFT’s challenges come against a backdrop of serious scrutiny. The trust made headlines as the first of its kind to face gross negligence manslaughter charges following the death of Alice Figueiredo at Goodmayes Hospital in 2015. After a high-profile trial at the Old Bailey in early 2025, the trust was acquitted of corporate manslaughter, while the ward manager implicated was also cleared of gross negligence manslaughter. This history underscores the critical importance of safety and risk management improvements now underscored by the latest CQC report.

In response, NELFT’s chief executive Paul Calaminus emphasised the trust's commitment to patient-centred care and transparency. Speaking publicly, he said: “The voices of our patients and their loved ones are central to the work we do, and we are committed to truly listening in order to take meaningful action that will shape the future of our services.” Calaminus acknowledged the mixed feedback, noting both gratitude for compassionate care and frustration where standards fell short, highlighting the necessity to deliver safe, high-quality services consistently.

Wellington Makala, NELFT’s executive chief nursing officer, echoed this sentiment, praising staff efforts and the improvements made since the last CQC inspection. Makala said, “Providing safe, compassionate care with integrity is always our top priority… We welcome the CQC’s findings and will act swiftly on areas for improvement to reduce variation in standards and strengthen the quality of our services.” The trust plans to work closely with patients, carers, and staff to ensure a uniformly high standard of care.

Importantly, the CQC rated NELFT’s leadership as ‘good’ overall, reflecting strength in governance despite operational challenges. The ongoing scrutiny by the regulator and the trust’s public commitment to addressing deficiencies underscore the critical need for improvement in mental health service provision, particularly for vulnerable children and young people navigating crucial transitions in care.

NELFT’s case highlights the broader pressures within the NHS mental health sector, balancing compassionate care delivery with resource constraints and rising demand. The trust’s experience may serve as a cautionary tale and a call to action for enhanced investment, better risk management, and improved patient pathways to reduce delays and improve outcomes.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/trust-overseeing-4-3m-patients-in-east-london-and-home-counties-told-to-improve-services/), [[3]](https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/trust-overseeing-4-3m-patients-in-east-london-and-home-counties-told-to-improve-services/), [[6]](https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RTF/inspection-reports?date=2024-10-01&date=2025-03-31)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/trust-overseeing-4-3m-patients-in-east-london-and-home-counties-told-to-improve-services/), [[6]](https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RTF/inspection-reports?date=2024-10-01&date=2025-03-31)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/trust-overseeing-4-3m-patients-in-east-london-and-home-counties-told-to-improve-services/), [[3]](https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/trust-overseeing-4-3m-patients-in-east-london-and-home-counties-told-to-improve-services/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/trust-overseeing-4-3m-patients-in-east-london-and-home-counties-told-to-improve-services/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/trust-overseeing-4-3m-patients-in-east-london-and-home-counties-told-to-improve-services/)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/trust-overseeing-4-3m-patients-in-east-london-and-home-counties-told-to-improve-services/), [[4]](https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RTF/inspection-summary), [[5]](https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RTF/inspection-reports)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.yellowad.co.uk/trust-overseeing-4-3m-patients-in-east-london-and-home-counties-told-to-improve-services/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RTF> - The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. They monitor, inspect, and regulate services to ensure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety. Their website provides detailed information on inspection reports, ratings, and regulatory actions for various healthcare providers, including NHS trusts like North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT).
3. <https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/> - North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT) is an NHS foundation trust providing mental and community health services across North East London and parts of Essex and Kent. Established in 2000, NELFT operates over 150 sites, including hospitals and community health services, serving a population of approximately 4.3 million people. Their services encompass forensic services, psychiatric intensive care units, and support for individuals with learning difficulties.
4. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RTF/inspection-summary> - The Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducts regular inspections of healthcare providers to assess the quality and safety of their services. Inspection reports detail findings on areas such as patient care, safety, effectiveness, responsiveness, and leadership. These reports are publicly available and provide insights into the performance of NHS trusts and other healthcare providers.
5. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RTF/inspection-reports> - The Care Quality Commission (CQC) publishes inspection reports for healthcare providers, including NHS trusts like North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT). These reports offer detailed assessments of service quality, highlighting areas of good practice and those requiring improvement. They serve as a valuable resource for patients, families, and healthcare professionals to understand the standards of care provided.
6. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RTF/inspection-reports?date=2024-10-01&date=2025-03-31> - The Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducts inspections of healthcare providers to assess the quality and safety of their services. Inspection reports detail findings on areas such as patient care, safety, effectiveness, responsiveness, and leadership. These reports are publicly available and provide insights into the performance of NHS trusts and other healthcare providers.
7. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RTF/inspection-reports?date=2024-10-01&date=2025-03-31> - The Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducts inspections of healthcare providers to assess the quality and safety of their services. Inspection reports detail findings on areas such as patient care, safety, effectiveness, responsiveness, and leadership. These reports are publicly available and provide insights into the performance of NHS trusts and other healthcare providers.