# Inquiry into deaths of more than 2,000 mental health patients in Essex NHS units begins



An ongoing public inquiry is examining the deaths of more than 2,000 mental health patients linked to NHS-run inpatient units in Essex, covering a period from 2000 to 2023. The Lampard Inquiry, chaired by Baroness Kate Lampard, has convened at Arundel House in central London and is addressing complex and sensitive issues surrounding mental healthcare during this extensive timeframe.

The inquiry’s remit includes patients who died as inpatients receiving NHS-funded care, including those treated in the independent sector, as well as individuals who died within three months after discharge. At an earlier hearing, Baroness Lampard acknowledged that the true number of deaths may never be fully known but is expected to be significantly higher than the 2,000 previously reported.

Marking the start of a three-week series of hearings from 1 May to 15 May, Baroness Lampard outlined the inquiry’s intention to confront a range of difficult questions head on. She said, “At future hearings the inquiry will… explore evidence on relevant themes and issues, some of which are likely to evoke strong opinions and give rise to conflicting viewpoints.”

Among the challenging topics to be addressed are the preventability of suicide, including whether it should be considered preventable in every case, and the concept of compassion fatigue—a state where prolonged exposure to suffering leads to a decline in empathy among healthcare staff. The inquiry will also consider the appropriateness of detaining patients under the Mental Health Act, and how mental healthcare balances risk management with therapeutic treatment.

Baroness Lampard remarked, “I understand these will be difficult discussions but an inquiry of this scope and importance cannot do anything but confront head on these big and difficult questions. There will be topics that this inquiry covers that will be challenging for some people to listen to which is why I wanted to acknowledge that now from the very start of these evidential hearings.”

She emphasised the pioneering nature of the investigation, noting that it is “breaking new ground” as the first UK public inquiry focused specifically on mental healthcare. The current hearings aim to provide important contextual background regarding mental health inpatient care in Essex, featuring testimony from medical experts, healthcare providers, and other relevant organisations. These sessions are intended to clarify what good mental healthcare should have entailed over the 24-year scope of the inquiry.

Baroness Lampard explained, “This is the start of us exploring the background and context to our inquiry – a process that will examine matters with greater specificity over the next 18 months of hearings.”

Though centred on Essex, the inquiry holds national significance with potential implications for mental healthcare delivery across the United Kingdom. Upon conclusion, Baroness Lampard will publish a report containing findings and recommendations aiming to drive improvements throughout the country’s mental health services.

Outside Arundel House, where the inquiry is convening, campaigners have gathered to highlight the ongoing concerns related to the care of mental health patients, underscoring the public and familial interest in the inquiry’s outcomes. The inquiry continues to listen to a broad spectrum of evidence and testimony as it progresses through its comprehensive investigation.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://lampardinquiry.org.uk> - Official website of the Lampard Inquiry, corroborating its focus on investigating mental health inpatient deaths in Essex.
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/essex-nhs-london-allen-b1224673.html> - Confirms the inquiry's examination of NHS-run inpatient units (2000-2023), inclusion of post-discharge deaths, and Baroness Lampard's warning about the death toll exceeding 2,000.
3. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/essex-nhs-london-b2740731.html> - Supports claims about scope (deaths within three months post-discharge/NHS-funded independent care) and the inquiry's intent to address challenging themes like compassion fatigue.
4. <https://www.inquest.org.uk/statutory-inquiry-into-deaths-in-essex-mental-health-services-to-resume> - Verifies the April 2025 resumption of hearings and statutory nature of the inquiry investigating Essex mental health service deaths.
5. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/essex-nhs-matthew-london-health-and-safety-executive-b2740484.html> - Details the inquiry's focus on EPUT/NELFT trusts, criteria for including community deaths, and scheduled testimony from regulatory bodies like the Health and Safety Executive.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/essex-nhs-london-allen-b1224673.html> - Reinforces Baroness Lampard's statements about confronting difficult questions and the inquiry's pioneering role in UK mental healthcare investigations.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/mental-health-deaths-inquiry-to-confront-big-and-difficult-questions-head-on-LFLM2DA5XBODRKW3CQBHKEBQB4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data