

Telegraph 31st August 2016

# Troubled NHS chief has new role on same pay

Head of mental health trust that failed to keep patients safe stands aside but keeps £240k package

By Sarah Knapton

THE chief executive of a beleaguered health trust has agreed to stand down following heavy criticism, yet she will receive the same pay and benefits in an advisory role.  
Katrina Percy will continue to be

paid around £240,000 a year by the Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust even though the Care Quality Commission said in April that the trust was still failing to protect patients from risk of harm. Southern has been under intense scrutiny since an independent review found it had failed to investigate the unexpected deaths of hundreds of its patients between 2011 and 2015.

In July it emerged that the trust paid millions of pounds to consultancy firms run by previous associates of Ms Percy. One firm was paid more than £5 million for a contract that was originally

tendered for £288,000, while another firm was awarded a contract for around £600,000 for which it did not have to bid. Ms Percy said she was stepping aside from the top job after her position became "untenable".

In a statement, she said: "I have reflected on the effect the ongoing personal media attention has had on staff and patients and have come to the conclusion that this has made my role untenable. I have therefore come to the difficult decision to step down from my role as chief executive after nine years. "I know, and understand, that many

will say I should have stepped down sooner given the very public concerns which have been raised in the past months. I stayed on as I firmly believed it was my responsibility to oversee the necessary improvements and to continue the ground-breaking work we have begun with GPs to transform care."

The Trust said Julie Dawes, director of nursing and quality, is acting as interim chief executive. Last year, Ms Percy earned a salary of at least £185,000 and £52,500 in pension-related benefits. She will continue to receive that sum as an adviser. Southern

was criticised following the deaths of hundreds of patients, including 18-year-old Connor Sparrowhawk who died in 2013. In October, a jury inquest ruled that neglect contributed to the death of Mr Sparrowhawk, who drowned after an epileptic seizure at Slade House in Headington, Oxfordshire.

In April, CQC inspectors found that robust arrangements to investigate incidents, including deaths, had not been put in place.

Southern Health is a mental health trust providing services to 45,000 people across Hampshire, Dorset,

Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Tim Smart, the interim chairman, said: "Katrina has ensured that Southern Health is now working more closely with other health and care organisations in the region to provide more joined up care."

Norman Lamb, the former care minister, said: "Under her watch, patients and families were fatally let down by a rotten culture. Reports that she will move into another well-paid job will aggravate the sense of injustice."

Editorial Comment: Page 17