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Two North East nurses facing tribunal over ambulance service 'cover-ups'

Leading nurses Shelley Dyson and Joanne Baxter face a tribunal hearing set to last 21 days

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Sam Volpe Health Reporter

19:18, 23 Feb 2026



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General view of a North East Ambulance Service building

A joint tribunal hearing examining the conduct of two leading North East nurses connected to ["historical failings"](#) at [North East Ambulance Service](#) has begun. The hearing into the actions of Joanne Baxter and Shelley Dyson - senior figures at NEAS when concerns about "cover-ups" of information that ought to have been shared with coroners - is set to last 21 days, the hearing heard.

Both women, no longer employed at NEAS, face allegations relating to dishonesty and the bullying of colleagues. Each, appeared virtually at a hearing held by the Nursing and Midwifery Council, represented by lawyers.

Tribunal panel chair Angela Kell began proceedings by highlighting that the hearing is now expected to last a total of 21 days. The panel - completed by lay member Caroline Taylor and registered nurse Katrina Maclaine - also heard an application that elements of the hearing are conducted in private.

For the NMC, which formally brings the allegations, case presenter Rowena Wisniewska highlighted elements of the case which would touch on private matters relating to some patients and colleagues at the ambulance service. This application was not contested by either Christopher Bealey - representing Mrs Baxter - or Priya Khanna, for Ms Dyson.

The hearing then went into private session to consider how to proceed with regard to "hearsay" evidence, relating to those not giving evidence in person. This was not resolved on the opening day of the hearing.

In 2021, whistleblowers including coroners and claims officer Paul Calvert raised concerns publicly about the withholding or altering of documents that should have been shared with coroners in a number of cases. This related to examples where patients - including Quinn Evie Milburn Beadle, Andrew Watson and Peter Coates - died following contact with the ambulance service.

Each case saw documents relating to investigations which followed a death either not shared with the coroner or shared following a delay. In 2021, NEAS's then

chief-executive Helen Ray accepted "historical failings" in processes around communicating with coroners.

Senior [NHS](#) figure, [Dame Marianne Griffiths, later led a "review" of the scandal](#) - finding in summer 2023 that "leadership dysfunction" had played a key role in what went on. Dame Marianne found "antagonism" between senior executives, "working in silos" and "dysfunction" at board level had been reasons for the "cultural" issues and communications failures which she said had led to the issue.

At the hearing, the NMC made an application for both reports including Dame Marianne's and a report produced by the firm Audit One to be admitted formally as "hearsay evidence". It is understood that legal argument as to this was set to take place.