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Inquest to be held into NEAS County Durham 'cover-up' death

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By **Daniel Hordon** Digital News Editor

A pre-inquest review will be held next month into the death of a County Durham man which the North East Ambulance Service is accused of trying to cover up.

Andrew Edward Watson was 32 years old when he died on October 10, 2019, at a supported living facility in Langley Moor.

Staff called 999 when he was having trouble breathing, his throat was swollen, and he had been vomiting blood.

After 57 minutes paramedics were yet to arrive and staff called again for an ambulance when he became “unresponsive”. The call was reprioritised and medics arrived in the space of 10 minutes but Mr Watson was pronounced dead a short time later, despite attempts to save his life.

An internal ambulance service report said it is likely he "would have benefited from earlier treatment ", and the delay getting to him was "likely" to have contributed to his death. The details of that report were leaked to **The Sunday Times** in 2022 by a whistleblower who alleged the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) had attempted to cover up deaths.

During a hearing at Crook Coroners’ Court on Monday (February 24) Senior Assistant Coroner Crispin Oliver listed the case for a pre-inquest review next month.

An inquest was initially opened after his death in 2019 but closed a short time later with his death having been considered natural. It was reopened in November.

Last month the Echo told **how Andrew’s family feel ambulance chiefs tried to cover up his death**, and are backing calls for a public inquiry into NEAS.

“He should still be here today”, sister Rachel said.

NEAS has previously apologised.

