

The Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related Deaths  
Chairman: Mr John O'Hara QC

**STATEMENT BY MR JOHN O'HARA QC, CHAIRMAN**

**THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2004**

1. I am honoured to accept my appointment by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to conduct this Inquiry into the events surrounding and following the deaths of the three young children, Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson.
2. The Terms of Reference of the Inquiry which have been published today are very broad and I believe they will enable me to look at all the issues which need to be examined. It is important to note that apart from the specific Terms of Reference, I have been given a general discretion to examine and report on any other relevant matters which arise.
3. I know that some concern has already been expressed that the Inquiry is not being conducted by someone from outside Northern Ireland. I want to emphasise my own independence from the Department and from those individuals and public bodies whose conduct will be examined. But I also want to make the point that as one who lives in Northern Ireland I have an obvious interest in an effective and efficient public health service. I have no interest whatever in protecting from criticism any individual or body which has been incompetent, inefficient or worse.
4. I have been promised by the Department that I will have access to all the support and expertise which is necessary to conduct this Inquiry. A dedicated Inquiry Team has been established which will operate from offices in Adelaide Street, Belfast. I will obviously need expert advice which I will obtain from outside Northern Ireland. A number of names have already been suggested and I am confident that I will have access to impartial experts whose input will be essential.

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