

News Release

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Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

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STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 1400HRS ON 18 NOVEMBER 2004

18 November 2004

INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD DEATHS LAUNCHED

Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Angela Smith, MP, today announced the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into the deaths of Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson.

The Minister said: "I believe it is of the highest importance that the general public has confidence in the quality and standards of care provided by our health and social services. This is why I recently announced that I had appointed John O'Hara, QC, to conduct an independent Inquiry into the events surrounding the deaths of Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson.

"The death of any child is tragic and it is essential that the investigation into these deaths is independent, comprehensive and rigorous. The Terms of Reference I have set for the Inquiry and the powers available to it are wide-ranging and should ensure that the Inquiry deals with all the issues of concern."

The Inquiry will examine the events surrounding and following the deaths of Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson with particular reference to:

- i. The care and treatment of Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson, especially in relation to the management of fluid balance and the choice and administration of intravenous fluids in each case.

Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast BT4 3SJ
Tel: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED] E-Mail: press.office [REDACTED]

- ii. The actions of the statutory authorities, other organisations and responsible individuals concerned in the procedures, investigations and events which followed the deaths of Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson.
- iii. The communications with, and explanations given to, the respective families and others by the relevant authorities.

In addition, Mr O'Hara will have the discretion to examine and report on any other relevant matters which arise in connection with the Inquiry.

The Minister said: **"The public interest is best served if the Inquiry is conducted in an open and transparent way and has appropriate powers to call on the key people involved. The detailed arrangements for the conduct of the Inquiry will be a matter for Mr O'Hara.**

"However, I can confirm that it is the intention that the questioning of key witnesses will be conducted in public. Moreover, Mr O'Hara will have the power to require any person to attend and give evidence and to furnish information to any matter in question at the Inquiry. In addition, all formal statements provided to the Inquiry will be placed in the public domain and the final report from the Inquiry will be published.

"I have every confidence that Mr O'Hara will conduct a thorough and rigorous inquiry and will establish what happened in these tragic cases."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

The Inquiry is being established under Article 54 and Schedule 8 to the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972.

The full Terms of Reference of the Inquiry are as follows:

In pursuance of the powers conferred on it by Article 54 and Schedule 8 to the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, the

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety hereby appoints Mr John O'Hara, QC, to hold an Inquiry into the events surrounding and following the deaths of Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson, with particular reference to:

- i. The care and treatment of Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson, especially in relation to the management of fluid balance and the choice and administration of intravenous fluids in each case.
- ii. The actions of the statutory authorities, other organisations and responsible individuals concerned in the procedures, investigations and events which followed the deaths of Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson.
- iii. The communications with, and explanations given to, the respective families and others by the relevant authorities.

In addition, Mr O'Hara will:

- a. Report by 1 June 2005 or such other date as may be agreed with the Department, on the areas specifically identified above and, at his discretion, examine and report on any other relevant matters which arise in connection with the Inquiry.
- b. Make such recommendations to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety as he considers necessary and appropriate.

Media queries to DHSSPS Press Office on [REDACTED]

SMT.