

The Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related Deaths

Chairman: Mr John O'Hara QC

Mr Des McCann
Departmental Solicitors Office
2nd Floor
Centre House
Chichester Street
BELFAST
BT1 4JE

Our Ref: BC-0233-16

Date: 16th August 2016

Dear Mr McCann,

Re: Your Client(s): DoH

Thank you for your letter of 19th July. I would be grateful if you would provide clarification on the following issues:

1. Serious Adverse Incidents

Your letter refers to the Department having “promoted”, “encouraged” and “signposted” certain matters while “exploring” and working on an “ongoing” basis on others. In terms of actual change having been effected in light of the Donaldson report and the Department’s role in ensuring that change has occurred and is being applied, what is the current position?

From what date has the deaths of children from natural causes been no longer classified as an SAI? Please describe the “new regional process for recording and reviewing child deaths”.

Please provide a copy of the checklist dated February 2015 regarding better engagement of people and their relatives in the SAI process. Please provide copies of any learning reports issued subsequently which include the relevant data.

2. Please clarify your response to Question 2 (i). Is there guidance in existence which encompasses the Permanent Secretary’s direction that it be made clear that “litigation or legal proceedings should not be an obstacle to engaging with patients, clients and families”? If not, why?
3. In relation to your response to Question 3, when was the scoping exercise carried out, is it complete and what is the plan going forward?
4. Question 6 – what type of cases were the 15 that attracted confidentiality clauses? Describe the procedure for seeking and obtaining Departmental approval to a confidentiality clause.

Secretary: Bernie Conlon

Arthur House, 41 Arthur Street, Belfast, BT1 4GB

Email: inquiry@ihrdni.org **Website:** www.ihrdni.org **Tel:** 028 9044 6340 **Fax:** 028 9044 6341

5. Question 7 – when is the final report of the RQIA review of the operation of whistle blowing expected?
6. Question 9 – On receipt of a rule 23 report how does the Department satisfy itself that the relevant Trust has learned any lessons and made any necessary changes to practice?
Are there any meeting dates in place for officials from the Department to meet with Coroners' Office staff regarding Rule 23 reports?
7. Question 11 – Has the Department any evidence of Trusts using the unique identifier to identify errors in coding? What information does the Department hold regarding Trusts' internal auditing of their coding systems?
8. Question 12 – Has the Regional Mortality and Morbidity Review System (RMMRS) been rolled out? If so when did it start and if not when is it due to commence?
9. Question 15 – please clarify your response. In simple terms has the Death Certification Implementation Working Group (established in October 2013) reported and if not when it is due to? What is the department's current position regarding the introduction of an Independent Medical Reviewer who would have powers to refer cases to the Coroner?
10. Question 20 - what action has the Department taken to ensure each Trust has actually taken the actions they proposed to the Department as a result of the GAIN report in August 2014?
11. Question 23 – in what way has the NIPEC and the CNO initiative on record keeping been communicated to trusts: how are improvements as a result of this work monitored and measured?
12. Question 26(i) – please provide a copy of the Regional Learning System Project Report August 2015. Have the recommendations been accepted and implemented?
13. Question 28 – please clarify this response.
14. Question 30 – your response refers to “multi-agency forums that meet regularly where SAls and learning from SAls reviews is considered”. Please identify those who meet and how often do they do so. Please provide a copy of the last meeting's agenda.

Dr Michael McBride informed the Chairman at the oral hearings that he had "asked RQIA to do a review of the complaints process in 2013 as part of their thematic reviews and they'll be reviewing the SIA systemin 2014" (ref Transcript 14/11/2013 p69 lines 6-9 HSCB/PHA). RQIA have recently confirmed that they did not carry out a review of the complaints process in 2013, nor review it in 2014. The next work scheduled (since a report dated Feb 2012) is as part of RQIA Three Review Programme and is currently scheduled for 2017/2018. I would be grateful if you would clarify the position.

The Chairman requests that you respond within 7 days.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bernie Conlon".

Bernie Conlon
Secretary to the Inquiry