

Witness Statement Ref. No.

21/1

NAME OF CHILD: RAYCHEL FERGUSON

Name: Raymond Ferguson

Title: Mr.

Present position and institution:

Previous position and institution:

[As at the time of the child's death]

Membership of Advisory Panels and Committees:

[Identify by date and title all of those between January 2000 – November 2012]

Previous Statements, Depositions and Reports:

[Identify by date and title all those made in relation to the child's death]

OFFICIAL USE:

List of previous statements, depositions and reports attached:

| Ref: | Date: | |
|-------------|----------|------------------------|
| 095-005-015 | 07/09/05 | PSNI Witness Statement |

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS FOR ANSWERING:

Please attach additional sheets if more space is required. Please identify clearly any document to which you refer or rely upon for your answer. If the document has an Inquiry reference number, e.g. Ref: 049-001-001 which is 'Chart No.1 Old Notes', then please provide that number.

If the document does not have an Inquiry reference number, then please provide a copy of the document attached

I. QUERIES ARISING OUT OF YOUR POLICE WITNESS STATEMENT

Raychel is Brought to the Accident and Emergency Department of Altnagelvin Hospital

- (1) *"I left my post unmanned. We then went straight to Altnagelvin Hospital. Raychel was seen by a doctor who said it might be her appendix. This was the same doctor who operated on her, Doctor Makar. He gave her an injection for pain and she was well improved after that. We were told because Raychel had had her dinner they could not operate until maybe two or three in the morning."* (Ref: 095-005-015)
- (a) How would you describe Raychel's condition when you first arrived with her at the hospital? She was very grey, sick and weak looking.
 - (b) Apart from Dr. Makar, can you recall any other doctor examining Raychel in Casualty? No.
 - (c) In what way(s) did Raychel's condition improve after receiving an injection for pain? In particular please clarify whether her pain was affected by the injection. Within 15 minutes she came around quickly. She came around and started chatting and I thought she was going to be okay. Her colour returned as well.
 - (d) How long did this improvement in Raychel's condition last for? She was in great form up until we left her that night.
 - (e) Did you discuss this improvement in Raychel's condition with any doctor? If so, please identify who you discussed it with, and provide details of that discussion. No.
 - (f) Did Dr. Makar or any other doctor explain to you why it might be her appendix and why it was thought that an operation was necessary? If so, please explain what you were told. He felt her stomach and right hand side and said it could be her appendix. He said if we open her up and they look okay they would still take them out.
 - (g) Did you ask Dr. Makar or any other doctor any questions about the diagnosis and the need for an operation? If so, please provide details of what you asked and what information were you given. I just accepted what doctor told me.

Children's Ward

- (2) *"We went up to ward 6 along with Raychel and explained to her when she had settled down that we were going to go home and collect a few things for her."* (Ref: 095-005-016)

- (a) Please describe Raychel's condition when she was admitted into the children's ward. She seemed fine to me and in good form.
- (b) Please describe Raychel's condition when you returned to the hospital after collecting a few things from home. She was still the same as above.
- (c) Were you present when an Anaesthetist examined Raychel? If so, was there any discussion with him of Raychel's condition or her need for surgery? I do not recall this at all but my wife may recall it.

Surgery

(3) *"The nurse told us Raychel would be in theatre for an hour, she told us to go and get a cup of tea. We went and got a cup of tea and returned at approximately half past midnight. There was no sign of Raychel. We asked a nurse what was keeping Raychel and the nurse told us that once Raychel was ready to come back up from the theatre the ward would be contacted. We stayed at the ward and sometime after two o'clock Raychel was brought back up onto the ward."* (Ref: 095-005-016)

- (a) If you can, please identify by name or description the nurse who you spoke to about the delay in Raychel returning to the ward? I do not recall her name. At this point now I am sorry but unfortunately I cannot recall the name or give any description.
- (b) Were you concerned about this delay? Yes.
- (c) Did the nurse's words reassure you? It did and it didn't. I just was not sure. I wanted to take the nurse at her word but I was unsure.
- (d) When Raychel was returned to the ward did you receive any information in relation to the following matters:
 - (i) The outcome of the operation; My memory is that one of the nurse's told me the operation was successful.
 - (ii) Raychel's condition; We were told she was sleeping and would come around again by the nurses.
 - (iii) How she might recover from surgery (i.e. the likely post-operative course); We were just told she was sleeping and she would eventually come around.
 - (iv) The treatment plan going forward? The next thing I recall is that one of the nurses who I remember as being very abrupt telling us that only one of us could stay. We said we wanted to both stay and myself and my wife had a debate about who this would be. It was decided I would stay. I am subject to correction but I think it was Nurse Noble who I refer to and my wife has always referred to as the "cheeky one".

In relation to each of these matters, please explain what you were told, and who provided you with the information.

(e) How would you describe Raychel's condition overnight? I recall she was asleep from when she came back from the operation at about 2.10 am or 2.15 am until around 7.30 am or 8.00 am.

(4) *"My recollection is that Raychel was not on a drip going to theatre but on being wheeled back into the ward the drip was wheeled in also. I remember the drip bleeping all night and the nurses were in working on it all night. I cannot remember the names of any of those nurses."* (Ref: 095-005-016)

(a) Was Raychel's need for intravenous fluids explained to you by nursing or medical staff? No.

(b) If so, what were you told about this? Not applicable.

(c) Please explain what you mean by your comment that nurses were working on the drip "all night," and address the following specific matters:

(i) Identify by description those nurses who were working on the drip. Three different nurses during the night came in. I cannot recall their names. They came in when the machine at the drip bleeped. It was like a fast bleep and woke me out of the doze I was in.

(ii) Between what times (approximately) were they working on the drip? That is impossible to answer. I remember the bleep alarm going off about three times.

(iii) What exactly were they doing when they were working on the drip? I am not sure as I was on the other side of the bed.

(iv) Was it your impression that there was a problem with the drip? If so, explain how you reached that view? At the time no. I just thought it was normal.

(v) Did you ask any of the nurses to explain why they had been working on the drip? If so, who did you speak to and what explanation were you given? No.

(vi) Did you subsequently raise any complaint or enquiry about the performance of the drip machine? If so, when did you raise it, and who did you raise it with? No.

Developments on the Morning of the 8th June 2001

(5) *"At around half past eight in the morning Raychel woke up and was talking to me. I asked her if she wanted to go for a walk and she got out of bed and was along the ward pushing her drip...I remember that Raychel walked out of the ward and into the corridor. She then walked back to her bed and got into bed."* (Ref: 095-005-016)

(a) How would you describe Raychel's condition first thing on the morning of the 8 June 2001? She seemed well then to me.

- (b) Do you recall whether Raychel had any requirement for medication that morning?
No.
- (c) How long did Raychel spend walking before returning to bed? She just walked up the corridor and back to her bed.
- (d) Subsequently, how long did Raychel spend out of bed with her colouring book and pens? I went down and got her colouring books and pens. I was no more than 15 minutes. Then I came back and gave them to her and she played away with them for at least 20 minutes.
- (6) *"The doctors came into their ward soon after doing their ward rounds. Doctor Makar was there and he told me the operation went well and that Raychel's appendix was slightly inflamed. I recall the ward sister Nurse Millar was also present. I do not recall the identities of any of these doctors but I know that there were other doctors present. I cannot recall any discussion about Raychel's treatment or the fluid that she was on. I do not know which doctor made any of the decisions about fluids but I am sure that the fluids remained up and the bag was changed when it was empty."* (Ref: 095-005-016)
- (a) Was Raychel examined by any of the doctors during the ward round? If so, were the findings reported to you? I have no memory of this at all.
- (b) Did you discuss Raychel's condition with any doctor apart from with Dr. Makar? If so, please describe the nature of that discussion. No.
- (c) Apart from telling you that the operation had gone well, did Dr. Makar provide you with any other information about Raychel's condition or treatment plan? No.
- (d) Were you present when Raychel's bag of fluids was changed? If so, if you can, please identify who changed the bag, state when this took place, and describe how often were the bags of fluid being changed? I recall fluid bag being changed and I think, subject to correction, it was Nurse Noble.
- (e) Did you have a discussion with any member of nursing or medical staff during the 8 June 2001 about the fluids which Raychel was receiving, and the purpose of those fluids? No.
- (7) Did nursing staff explain to you the nursing plan for Raychel for that day? If so, please state what were you told. No.
- (8) Did nursing staff give you any instruction about reporting the following matters to them in relation to Raychel:
- (a) Episodes of vomiting; No.
- (b) Consumption of fluids by mouth; No.
- (c) Urine output. No.

If you did receive any instruction in relation to any of these matters, describe what you were told and what you did as a result of any such instruction.

- (9) When you discovered that Raychel had been sick that morning, did you report this to nursing or medical staff? If so, please identify who you reported it to and outline the discussion that took place. I did not but my wife did as we only discussed this when my wife arrived and Raychel told her. It seems the vomit that Raychel was referring to happened when I was away getting the colouring books and pens.
- (10) What time (approximately) did you leave the hospital that morning? Around 11.00 am as my wife arrived 9.30 am / 10.00 am.
- (11) How would you describe Raychel's condition at the time you left the hospital? She was sitting up in the bed when I left and seemed grand to me.

Developments in the Afternoon of the 8th June 2001

- (12) *"I returned to the hospital between one and half past one. When I came in Marie told me that she had carried Raychel to the toilet and that she filled the sink with vomit from the Chinese she had eaten the night before. Raychel remained in bed whilst I was there and vomited several times. I recall taking several kidney trays filled with vomit out to the nurses. The vomit seemed to be very watery. The nurses told me that that was only normal and that she would stop now as her stomach was empty. Both Marie and I left the hospital at three o'clock..."* (Ref: 095-005-017)
- (a) Insofar as you are aware, how many times had Raychel vomited during the period when you were away from the hospital? At least twice.
- (b) What was Raychel's condition at the time of your return to the hospital? She seemed to be going down hill. But I thought it was just after the operation. She was quieting down. She wasn't speaking properly and was just muttering words.
- (c) At what time (approximately) did Raychel first vomit in the period after you returned to the hospital? It seemed to be just as I arrived that she vomited.
- (d) After your return to the hospital, indicate (approximately) how many episodes of vomiting were experienced by Raychel before you left the hospital again at 15.00 hours? Three times.
- (e) If it is not appropriate to describe her vomiting during that period in terms of individual episodes, how would you describe the vomiting? She was heaving and making some noise. She seemed to be straining and the vomit was "gooey" with red dots in it.
- (f) How many kidney trays filled with vomit did you bring to the nurses? I took three that afternoon. That is between 1.00 pm and 3.00 pm approximately. There were more later.

- (g) If you can, please identify by name or description the nurses who received the kidney trays from you. I cannot recall exact names but I think it was Nurses Gilchrist, Noble and Rice. When I took out the last one I said I thought it had blood in the vomit but the reply I got was that her stomach was empty now and she would not throw up again. I cannot remember which nurse it was who told me this.
- (h) Please identify by name or description the nurses who told you that the vomiting was normal and that it would now stop. I am not sure now.
- (i) Apart from telling you that Raychel's vomiting was normal and would now stop, did these nurses provide any other information or advice to you? Words to the effect that vomiting was normal and that Raychel would be okay.
- (j) At that time were you reassured by what the nurses told you? At the time I was as I simply thought the nurses knew best.
- (k) That afternoon, did the vomiting stop as the nurses had predicted? As far as I know, no.
- (l) Insofar as you are aware, did these nurses take any other steps when you made them aware that Raychel had filled several kidney trays with vomit? No.
- (m) How frequently did you report Raychel's vomiting during this period, and if you can, state the (approximate) time(s) when you made these reports? At least three times between 1.00pm and 3.00pm.
- (n) Did you ask for any action to be taken in relation to Raychel's vomiting during this period? If so, what did you ask for and what reply did you receive? I accepted what I was told about the vomiting by the nurses in that it was normal. I recall that myself and my wife noticed Raychel's lips looked dry. We asked one of the nurses if we could give her something to drink and we gave Raychel a capful of 7Up on the instructions of the nurse. A couple of minutes later Raychel threw this up.
- (o) Was Raychel examined by any nurse at any time after she vomited in this period? No.
- (p) Was Raychel vomiting when you left the hospital at 15.00 hours? No.
- (q) How would you describe Raychel's condition in the period between you returning to the hospital (between 13.00 and 13.30 hours) and when you left again at 15.00 hours? She was as above, vomiting.
- (r) Did Raychel have any other visitors when you and your wife left the hospital at 15.00 hours? Yes. As far as I know Margaret Harrison, her Godmother visited her on her own.

Developments on the Night of the 8th June 2001

- (13) When you returned to the hospital at 18.45 hours you have stated that Raychel did not acknowledge you, her brothers or her friend, and she was still lying in bed (Ref: 095-005-017).

- (a) Was Raychel's condition made known to nursing staff? Yes.
- (b) If so, insofar as you are able, please identify by name or description who you spoke to. Please provide details of what you said and any response you received. I do not recall names or what response I got apart from being told that her condition was normal after an operation and that she would be weak.
- (14) In addition to Raychel not acknowledging you, how would you describe her condition upon your return to the hospital? She seemed listless. She seemed lifeless in the bed which was so unlike Raychel.
- (15) When you returned to the hospital, were you made aware that a doctor had attended Raychel during the period when you had been away from the hospital? If so, who told you about this and what were you told? My wife told me that a doctor had attended her and gave her an injection to stop her being sick.
- (16) *"At around quarter to nine to nine o'clock Raychel sat up in bed and complained that her head was sore. I noticed she was bright red in the face. She was holding on to her head with both hands and saying, "Daddy, daddy, my heads wild sore." Raychel then vomited blood in the bed. Nurses then came in and made Raychel stand at the far side of the bed from me while they changed the bed. I noticed that Raychel could hardly stand. Raychel got back into bed and the nurses went out of the ward. Within minutes Raychel vomited blood all over again. The nurses came back in again and asked Raychel to stand out of the bed again. I said, "Hold on a minute, the wee girl can hardly stand." (Ref: 095-005-017)*
- (a) Please identify by name or description those nurses who attended Raychel on the two occasions when you described her vomiting blood on the bed. On the first occasion my memory after I went out to the nurses is that two nurses came in and one of them was nurse Gilchrist. The nurse with the dark hair. One of them got Raychel out of the bed on the other side of me. They said they would change Raychel and the bed. Raychel was unsteady on her feet swaying back and forward. They then got Raychel back into bed.
- (b) Did those nurses (or either of them) examine Raychel after she had vomited? If so, did they explain their findings to you? I only recall them changing the bedclothes while they made Raychel stand at the side of the bed.
- (c) Did those nurses explain why Raychel was vomiting blood? If so, what explanation was provided to you? No.
- (d) Did you inform either of those nurses that Raychel had complained to you about headache? If so, please:
- (i) Identify by name or description the nurse(s) who you spoke to about the headache? My memory is that it was the Nurse Nobel who came in after I ran out to the corridor to say Raychel complained of a headache and was bright red. That nurse then gave Raychel paracetamol and she reacted to this. Shortly after this Raychel threw up again and made a mess of the bed again. I went out to the nurses again. The nurse with the dark hair, Gilchrist, came in and asked Raychel to get out

of the bed. I said words to the effect, "hold on, she can hardly stand." I lifted Raychel out of the bed and put her on my knee while the bed was changed again. I got Raychel back into the bed then. The dark haired nurse went out and came back in with pillow cases and put them around Raychel's body and said words to the effect that if she throws up again they wouldn't have to get her out of bed. I also remember telephoning my wife, I think now before the second attendance on Raychel, and sweating very badly then with fear. I am not completely sure if I telephoned my wife after the second attendance on Raychel or just before it. But I do remember calling her.

- (ii) What did you say to the nurse(s) about the headache? I described exactly what Raychel said and what she had done as outlined above.
- (iii) What response did you receive from the nurse(s)? She (the nurse I met in the corridor) said she would get a couple of paracetamol for Raychel.
- (iv) Did you obtain any explanation from the nurses about what might be causing the headache? No.
- (e) Did those nurses (or either of them) provide any form of medication for Raychel? If so, when was this provided? As far as I know the paracetamol was all that was provided when the nurse came in to the ward.
- (f) Do you know what medication was given to Raychel by the nurses and was the purpose of the medication explained to you? I was just told that Raychel would be given some paracetamol but other than that no explanation as to why this medication was being given was provided.
- (g) If medication was provided by the nurses did it cause Raychel's condition to improve in any way? If so, describe this improvement, and indicate how long the improvement lasted for. No.

(17) *"I also want to say that at the time Raychel was complaining of a sore head I went out to the nurses in the corridor. I told Nurse Noble that Raychel was complaining of a sore head and was bright red in the face. Nurse Noble said she would come and give Raychel a paracetamol and did so a short time later. I remember feeling very angry at the way Nurse Noble dealt with that situation."* (Ref: 095-005-019)

- (a) Please explain why you felt very angry about the way Nurse Noble dealt with that situation. She appeared to me to be laid back and not concerned at all about my daughter.
- (b) Did you explain your concern to Nurse Noble or any other member of nursing staff? If so, what did you say, and what response did you receive? I was just dealing with the situation as it developed and I did not get into any debate with the nurses. I thought they knew best.

(18) *"At around half past nine I phoned Marie and told her that Raychel had vomited blood. I was really worried. I can remember the sweat running down my back. I told Marie that the nurses weren't listening to me."* (Ref: 095-005-018)

- (a) Please clarify in what sense you believed that the nurses weren't listening to you. My sense is that they were ignoring any genuine concerns and that I was overreacting. They just did not seem to care at all about Raychel or how I felt.
- (b) Did you made any request to the nurses to take any particular form of action that you felt was not being complied with (or listened to)? If so, please fully describe what it was you had asked for, who you addressed this to, and detail the response that you received. All I could do was explain to the nurses what I had witnessed as best I could and I left it to them to get on with their job.

(19) *"I can also recall that after Raychel had vomited blood a dark haired nurse in her late 30s, I think her name is Nurse Gilchrist, she checked Raychel's records. This nurse said that she thought a doctor had been up and given Raychel something but that he hadn't signed for it. This nurse told me she would get another doctor to give Raychel more stuff to stop her from being sick."* (Ref: 095-005-018)

- (a) Were you aware that Raychel was seen by a Dr. Curran at approximately 22.15 hours on the 8 June 2001? I cannot recall this now. I recall a doctor giving something to Raychel but time wise I am not now sure.

If you were aware of his attendance, please address the following matters:

- (i) Were you present when Dr. Curran attended? I recall a doctor giving something to Raychel but I am not sure who it was.
- (ii) Did you speak to Dr. Curran about your concerns for Raychel, and if so, what did he say to you? No. We did not speak to each other. I thought I had said enough to the nurses.
- (iii) What was your understanding of the purpose of Dr. Curran's visit? To give her an injection to stop her being sick as Nurse Gilchrist told me.
- (iv) Insofar as you are aware, what was Dr. Curran told about Raychel's history and condition? I do not know.
- (v) Insofar as you are aware, did Dr. Curran examine Raychel? I do not recall.
- (vi) Insofar as you are aware, did Dr. Curran consider Raychel's notes? I do not recall.
- (vii) Insofar as you are aware, what were Dr. Curran's findings or diagnosis? I do not recall.
- (viii) Insofar as you are aware, did Dr. Curran provide Raychel with medication and if so, was the purpose of that medication explained to you? Nothing was explained to me apart from Nurse Gilchrist saying the doctor was coming to give her something.

(ix) If medication was provided, did this cause Raychel's condition to improve in any way? If so, describe this improvement, and indicate how long the improvement lasted for. No.

(x) Were you reassured by Dr. Curran's visit? No.

(20) *"Marie arrived back at the hospital at around ten o'clock. We both stayed there until twenty to one in the morning."* (Ref: 095-005-018)

(a) What was Raychel's condition in the period between your wife's return to the hospital, and the time when you both left the hospital? We then thought she was sleeping and settled down.

(b) Did Raychel make any further complaint to you about headaches after 21.00 hours? If so, how many more complaints did she make? No.

(c) If Raychel raised further complaints about headache, did you report them to nursing staff? If so, identify by name or description the nurse you reported the headaches to, and what response did you receive? Not applicable.

(d) Did Raychel experience any further episodes of vomiting that night apart from the two episodes which you have described? If so, how many more episodes of vomiting did she suffer and what time (approximately) did they occur at? Not that I am aware of or witnessed.

(e) If Raychel did experience further episodes of vomiting, describe the nature and quantity of that vomiting? I did not see any but others may have.

(f) If Raychel did experience further episodes of vomiting, did you report them to nursing staff? If so, identify by name or description the nurse you reported the vomiting to, and what response did you receive? Not applicable.

(21) In the period between 21.00 hours when Raychel complained of headache and started to vomit blood, how frequently was she seen by a nurse? I do not recall any nurses in after that.

(22) In the period after 21.00 hours did any member of nursing staff provide you with an explanation for Raychel's condition? If so, identify by name or description the nurse who you spoke to, and outline what you were told. No.

The Events of the 8th June 2001

(23) By the time that you and your wife left the hospital at 00.40 hours, clarify the approximate time and periods (during the 8th June) when you personally observed Raychel vomiting, nauseous or retching, and describe any periods of time when she was free from those symptoms? I witnessed her vomiting between 1.00pm and 3.00pm. Then she vomited in my presence that evening (the blood vomit) all over the bed.

- (24) By the time you and your wife left the hospital at 00.40 hours, state the approximate number of occasions or episodes when you personally observed Raychel actually passing vomit (during the 8th June 2001)? Four.
- (25) When you and your wife left the hospital at 00.40 hours, what was your understanding of the following matters:
- (a) the nature and severity of Raychel's condition; She was sleeping. We were told that Raychel had a bad day and was sleeping now and would be grand.
 - (b) the cause of Raychel's condition; We were told this was all relevant to the operation.
 - (c) Raychel's prognosis; None.
 - (d) the treatment that had been provided for that condition; None.
 - (e) the treatment that was being provided for that condition? None.

The Period After Raychel's Seizure

- (26) *"I went to the hospital alone arriving at around 4.00am. Raychel's bed was surrounded by nurses and doctors when I returned to the ward."* (Ref: 095-005-018)
- (a) Before Raychel was transferred to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, did you seek or obtain any explanation for Raychel's deterioration? If so, who spoke to you about this and what were you told? It was complete chaos when I arrived back at the hospital at around 4.00am. Raychel was eventually lifted out of the bed and into another room. I was taken into a side room and made a cup of tea. I phoned my wife and told her to come over right away. Marie then arrived and she went off to find out what she could. I was in no fit state to do anything else. My next memory is going in to see Raychel with my wife and sister-in-law, still on the ward. She was unconscious and a lot connected to her. I recall a Doctor McCord (a grey haired man and if I have got his name right) telling us that Raychel was going for a catscan, or words to that effect. I then seen Raychel being taken out and then we followed. We waited for what seemed to be a very long time (it seemed long to us) then a doctor came out and said her brain scan came back and it was clear. I believe this was Doctor McCord the grey haired man. He also advised however that they wanted to get a second scan done. We had to wait again which again seemed very long and the Doctor advised us that she was very ill. He then advised that they found a trickle of blood at the back of Raychel's head, inside her skull and that she was going to intensive care in Altnagelvin. My next memory is that when I was in a side room at intensive care a nurse came in and we were allowed to go down and see Raychel and a priest was standing over her saying the Last Rites. We had no knowledge that this was happening and obviously we got upset and wanted to know what was going on.

Either before or after this (my memory is not now clear) a doctor with dark hair and a beard explained to us that Raychel was seriously ill and going to the Royal for "an operation", as soon as a bed could be got and a police escort. I do not know the name of the doctor.

No other explanations were given and we were then involved in getting ready to go to Belfast.

- (b) Was the reason for transferring Raychel to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children explained to you? If so, what explanation did you receive and who provided this explanation to you? As above. My recollection is that the doctor with the dark hair and beard only told us that Raychel was seriously ill and that she was going to the Royal for an "operation" as soon as a bed could be got and a police escort. No other explanation was given.

I recall Doctor Nesbit at the Royal after we arrived saying that Raychel had a comfortable journey and that there was a lot of movement from Raychel and that that was a good sign. That gave me some hope.

II. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- (27) Please provide any further points and comments that you wish to make, together with any relevant documents which you hold which have not been provided to the Inquiry to date. I reserve the right to make a further statement as deemed appropriate in due course.

THIS STATEMENT IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

Signed: *Raymond Ferguson*

Dated: *13th December 2012*