

Witness Statement Ref. No.

086/1

INQUIRY INTO HYPONATRAEMIA-RELATED DEATHS**Name:** John Cole**Title:** Mr**Present position and department/employer:**

- Chief Executive, Health Estates Agency.
- Member of Departmental Management Board, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Length of time in post: 1 year 10 months**Previous position and department/employer in 1995:**

Assistant Director, Estates Development

Health Estates Agency

Previous position and department/employer in 2000:

Director, Estates Development

Health Estates Agency

Previous position and department/employer in 2001:

Director, Estates Development

Health Estates Agency

Membership of Professionals Bodies:

Royal Institute of British Architects

Particular areas of interest

[Please attach additional sheets if more space is required]

(i) How and when did you first become aware of the deaths of Adam, Lucy and Raychel?

- I first became aware of the death of Lucy Crawford at a meeting of the Departmental Management Board on 27 February 2004 (minutes at 004-019-236). At this meeting Dr Carson informed the Board of the recent inquest into the death of Lucy Crawford and that the Department was planning to meet with the Sperrin Lakeland Trust to discuss the case.
- I became aware of the deaths of Adam Strain and Raychel Ferguson through media coverage around the time of the Insight Programme, 'When Hospitals Kill' in October 2004.

(ii) Describe in detail the steps you took to discover why these children died and to ensure that lessons were learned for the future.

- I requested that my Directors ensure that any information, which was held by the Health Estates Agency in relation to Lucy, Raychel and Adam, was secured in response to a request from Mr Gowdy dated 28 October 2004 (001-095-320). There was no information held within the Agency relating to Lucy, Raychel and Adam.
- I took no further steps in my role as Chief Executive of the Health Estates Agency

Particular areas of interest (Cont'd)

(iii) Give details of colleagues within the DHSSPS and others with whom you discussed the steps to be taken in response to the children's deaths, to include the reason why they were contacted by you, when and the outcome of your discussions.

- As detailed above I responded to a request from the Mr Gowdy to secure all relevant documents and records in relation to Lucy Crawford, Raychel Ferguson and Adam Strain. I requested that my Directors advise whether any records were held by the Agency relating to Lucy, Raychel and Adam.
- The only other colleagues I have discussed the steps to be taken with are members of the Departmental Management Board, I was present when Dr Carson advised the Board of the inquest into Lucy Crawford's death in February 2004, and again on 28 May 2004 (minutes at 004-020-238) when Colm Shannon provided a communications update to the Board highlighting the ongoing media interest in Lucy Crawford's case. At the meeting of the Board on 22 October 2004 I was present when Mr Gowdy referred to the UTV 'Insight' programme and agreed that an independent investigation should be held to examine the issues raised by the programme. I have not been involved in any other discussion about the steps to be taken in response to the deaths of Lucy, Raychel and Adam

(iv) In your role as a member of the Departmental Board, explain what information you received or solicited about the procedures, investigations and events that followed the deaths of Adam, Lucy and Raychel.

- I received the information that there had been an inquest into the death of Lucy Crawford at the Departmental Management Board meeting of 27 February 2004 and that there were plans for representatives from the Department to meet Sperrin Lakeland Trust to discuss the case.
- I received information at the Departmental Management Board meeting of 28 May 2004 that there was ongoing media interest in the Lucy Crawford case from Colm Shannon
- On 22 October 2004 I was present at the Departmental Board meeting where it was agreed that there should be an independent inquiry to look at the issues raised by the 'Insight' programme.
- On 28 October I received a request from Mr Gowdy to secure all relevant documents and records in relation to Lucy Crawford, Raychel Ferguson and Adam Strain. Having arranged for areas under my control to determine whether the Agency held any relevant information, on 5 November 2004 I advised Mr Gowdy that the Health Estates Agency held no relevant information (see e-mail at 001-129-428).

(v) Again in your role as a member of the Departmental Board, explain what steps you took to discover why the children died and to ensure that any lessons would be learned.

- I requested that areas under my responsibility ensure that any information which may have been held by the Health Estates Agency in relation to each of the children involved in this case was disclosed to the Department and the Inquiry team in response to a request from the Permanent Secretary dated 28 October 2004. There was however no information held within the Agency directly relating to the deaths of the children.

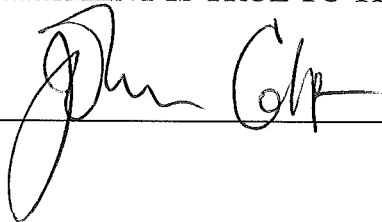
Other points you wish to make including additions to any previous Statements, Depositions and or Reports

[Please attach additional sheets if more space is required]

- I have no additional comments to make

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

Signed:



Dated:

06 July 05