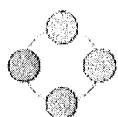
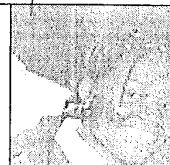


Ulster Television file



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Latest from Northern Ireland**Terms of Reference for Child Deaths Inquiry
18/11/04 [NI]**

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

The Inquiry will examine the events surrounding and following the deaths of the children whilst they were receiving treatment in Northern Ireland hospitals. Ulster Television's Insight programme recently asserted that the children had needlessly died from a treatable condition manifested by a shortage of sodium in the body, and alleged that the situation surrounding one of the deaths had been covered up.

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:

- *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.*
- *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.*
- *The communications with, and explanations given to, the respective families and others by the relevant authorities.*

In addition, Mr O'Hara will:

- *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.*
- *Make such recommendations to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety as he considers necessary and appropriate.*

Commenting on the Inquiry, the Minister said:

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"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 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."

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