

From: Jim Livingstone

Director, Safety, Quality & Standards

Date: 14 January 2009

To: Michael McGimpsey

**RE: SUB 1145/2008 INDEPENDENT REVIEW BY RQIA INTO THE
APPLICATION OF A SAFETY ALERT BY THE NATIONAL PATIENT SAFETY
AGENCY ON REDUCING THE RISK OF HYPONATRAEMIA IN CHILDREN –
FURTHER INFORMATION**

Summary

Issue: SUB 1145/2008, advising of the intended issue of the RQIA's report into the application of NPSA Safety Alert 22 on reducing the risk of hyponatraemia in children, was forwarded to your office on 3 December 2008. It included advice that our target for the issue of the report to the HSC was also 3 December and that it would issue publicly the following day, 4 December. You have requested an explanation as to why you or your special adviser were not therefore being given sufficient time to consider the issues. This submission provides clarification.

Timing: **Urgent** – This RQIA report, completed in August 2008, has not yet been issued and we are keen to do so in the interests of patient safety.

Presentational Issues: None in relation to this submission, although the report itself may attract some media attention.

FOI Implications: Fully discloseable

Recommendation: That you note the circumstances around the timing of SUB 1145/2008. You are also asked to advise whether you are content with the draft press release, lines to take and for the report to be issued.

Background

1. SUB 1145/2008 was sent to your office on 3 December 2008, notifying you of the content of the RQIA's review into the application of NPSA Safety Alert 22 – concerned with reducing the risk of hyponatraemia in children – and advising you of our intention to issue this report to the HSC. This submission included advice that our target was for the report to issue to the HSC on 3 December (the date it was sent to your office), and to the public on the following day, 4 December. You have asked for an explanation as to why neither you, nor your special adviser, were given sufficient time to consider the issues.

Position

2. Firstly, I would emphasise that this report has not been issued, and would not be issued, without your agreement. It was our original hope, in view of the subject matter, however that this could be effected by the start of December, but as explained below it quickly became apparent that this would not be possible and this was noted accordingly in the covering email to the submission.
3. SUB 1145/2008 was completed on 28 November and cleared by CMO on 1 December. The RQIA's report was concerned with the prevention of hyponatraemia in children, which as you know is the subject of an ongoing public inquiry. At that stage we had planned to issue it to the HSC on 3 December, followed by a press release on 4 December. Unfortunately, however, the draft letter to the HSC also required the approval of 2 other chief professional officers (Nursing and Pharmacy) and by the time we had obtained this the submission was not ready to be forwarded to your office until 3 December.
4. This made a nonsense of any hope that the Report could meet the targets within the planned timescale. Our covering email to the Private Office on 3 December made it clear that we would not be issuing the report as originally planned because you had not had a chance to clear it. The email stated *"You will note that the attached draft letter from CMO to Alice Casey suggests that we will issue the report to the service today and press release tomorrow. This will not now happen as Minister has not had a chance to clear. However we would still wish to get this out to the service at the earliest opportunity."* The fact that the report had not issued, and would not issue, until you had had an opportunity to consider it was reiterated by email following a further query from the Private Office on 18 December.
5. In summary, I apologise that the change to the timescale was noted in the covering email only and not by amendment to the submission, but would emphasise that the RQIA's report has not been issued, either to the HSC

or publicly, and will not be issued until you have considered the report's implications and agreed the suggested lines to take and draft press release contained within SUB 1145/2008.

Recommendation

6. That you note the circumstances around the timing of SUB 1145/2008 and review the content of that submission. If you are content, I would be grateful if you would agree the lines to take and draft press release and we will, if approved, move to arrange issue of the RQIA report.

Dr Jim Livingstone
Director, Safety, Quality & Standards Directorate
Ext [REDACTED]

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