

FROM: PS/Shawn Woodward  
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cc: See Distribution List

Sholto Carnew

**CONVERSATION WITH MARIE FERGUSON AND JAY SLAVIN, 29 JUNE 2005**

Shawn Woodward spoke to Marie Ferguson, mother of Raychel Ferguson, and Jay Slavin, uncle of Adam Strain.

2. Marie Ferguson said the families were "not a bit pleased" with the Minister's statement. He had referred to Lucy Crawford's last hours. How could he refer to one child's last hours and not all three? He didn't know what her child had suffered. The Minister said if Mrs Ferguson read the speech, she would see the context in which he had made his remarks, where he was talking about the need for change across the Health Service in Northern Ireland. He wanted to apologise for the fact that the families had been waiting for so long to get answers. The reason he had only referred to Lucy Crawford was because he had met with the Crawfords following their letter to him. He didn't think it was right to intrude on the privacy of another family with whom he had not met. If the Fergusons had asked him for a meeting, he would have been happy to meet them. Marie Ferguson asked why he hadn't invited them in for a meeting so they could explain what had happened. She said it wasn't just Sperrin Lakeland that needed examining – Altnagelvin needed to be looked at too. In her opinion, there was a lot of covering up going on. She asked why the hospital and the people involved couldn't apologise. If they never admitted liability, they couldn't learn from their mistakes. The Minister said that was why we had an Inquiry – to find out what happened. We had to wait and see what John O'Hara said. He said he was happy to meet. He hadn't made the meeting with the Crawfords public, and wouldn't intend to publicise this meeting: he would leave it up to the Fergusons to decide if they wanted to involve the media. [Meeting being arranged]

3. The Minister opened his conversation with Jay Slavin by explaining that he hadn't at all intended to make Adam and Raychel's families feel sidelined. His speech had set out what he hoped people could expect from the Northern Ireland Health Service and his



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remarks had been made in that context. The reason he felt he could say more about the Crawfords was because they had come forward and asked for a meeting. Jay Slavin said the Minister's speech had said the families just wanted to 'know'. He thought that was very presumptuous – how did he know what they wanted? Actually, they wanted someone to be held accountable. The Minister said that was why we had an Inquiry. Jay Slavin said the Department was interfering with the Inquiry. It had been left up to the Health Minister to decide if the death of a fourth child (Mitchell) should be covered by the Inquiry. That file was currently with the Department. The Inquiry was only independent when it suited the Minister: that sort of decision should be left up to the Inquiry, not the Department or the Minister. The Minister said it wasn't appropriate for him to talk about another family. The Inquiry would take its course and we had to wait for its outcomes: all he had said in the speech was that he was glad the Inquiry had been established because we all wanted answers. He understood that the scope of the Inquiry was for John O'Hara to decide: at the moment, Lucy Crawford, Adam Strain and Raychel Ferguson were included. If O'Hara felt another child needed to be brought in, that was up to him. He agreed to follow up on Jay Strain's claims about the Mitchell child. He asked Jay Strain if he would like a meeting: Mr Strain said he would.

*Signed*

**CATHY CLEMENTS**  
Private Secretary

cc: PS/Shawn Woodward (B&L) – O.



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