

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

DATE FOR ANSWER: 5 December 2007

PRIORITY WRITTEN NO:

AQW 2160/08

**Iris Robinson:** To ask the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any discussions he has had with John O'Hara regarding his inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related deaths, and to detail the dates of these discussions.

**Michael McGimpsey**

I met with John O'Hara on 31 May 2007 to discuss how the Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related deaths might be progressed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed and approved by the Minister for Health Social Services and Public Safety

## BACKGROUND NOTE

1. Iris Robinson has also asked another similar question (AQW 2159/08), for priority written answer on 5 December, enquiring what contact the Department has had with John O'Hara over the last year. Both questions are similar to queries received by the Departmental Press Office from the television reporter Trevor Birney on 5 November. The response provided above reflects that already provided to Mr Birney.
2. On 1 November 2004 the then Minister for Health, Angela Smith, announced an Inquiry into the events surrounding and following the deaths of three children from hyponatraemia-related causes between 1995 and 2001. The Inquiry, chaired by John O'Hara QC, has been suspended since 28 October 2005 pending the outcome of police investigations into the deaths of the three children.
3. You met with John O'Hara on 31 May 2007 to discuss progress of his Inquiry. At the meeting Mr O'Hara expressed concern that the Inquiry could not proceed because of delays in the PSNI investigation and PPS decisions. You undertook to write to the Chief Constable and the Director of the Public Prosecution Service seeking clarification on when decisions might be forthcoming.
4. The response received from PPS gave a commitment to expedite the matter as quickly as possible. The response from PSNI indicated that any outstanding issues regarding the three original cases were nearing resolution but that it was also considering a fourth case.
5. It is expected that the Inquiry will recommence in the very near future. It will be for John O'Hara to decide whether to extend the remit of the Inquiry to include any additional cases.

Drafted by Jennifer Mooney, 29 November 2007

Cleared by Head of Division – Dr Maura Briscoe, 3 December 2007

Cleared by Permanent Secretary - [DATE]

Cleared by Special Advisor - [DATE]

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