

THE MORECAMBE BAY INVESTIGATION

Chaired by Dr Bill Kirkup CBE

SUMMARY OF THE MEETING BETWEEN THE INVESTIGATION CHAIRMAN, DR BILL KIRKUP, AND THE FAMILIES

BARROW-IN-FURNESS - MONDAY 24 MARCH 2014

The Investigation Chairman welcomed families to the meeting, especially those who had responded to the notice in the local papers and who he had not met previously.

He explained that, since his appointment as Chairman of the Morecambe Bay Investigation, he had been committed to being accessible to the families. He hoped that this meeting was a good opportunity to continue those conversations.

The purpose of the meeting was: to provide the families directly with an update on progress with the Investigation, to outline the work that is currently underway, to set out the future work programme and to discuss the impact the ongoing work would have on the Investigation's timeline.

For those families who have only recently come into contact with the Investigation Dr Kirkup also provided some background about why it was established and how it had taken shape since families campaigned for the maternity and neonatal care at the Trust to be investigated.

The Chairman outlined what the evidence gathering process entailed and explained that the Investigation has identified over 20 organisations that may hold relevant evidence. He acknowledged that the impact of the most recent NHS reforms – and the volume of material that had to be searched - had presented some organisations with challenges locating and supplying evidence but he had been assured of the cooperation of organisations and anticipated outstanding evidence would be received shortly.

The Chairman clarified the position regarding its request for evidence from the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman (the PHSO). The Investigation was still in discussion with the PHSO regarding the difficulties they had identified in supplying material to the Investigation but that he remained optimistic about the outcome of those discussions.

Dr Kirkup also explained that, to ensure the expert advisors could contribute their time and expertise in the most focused manner, he had identified three key areas that the Investigation would work on:

- clinical reviews;
- the response of the Trust; and
- the response of external organisations and their governance arrangements.

He had established three sub groups chaired by Professor Stewart Forsyth, Dr Geraldine Walters and Professor Jonathan Montgomery to concentrate on these areas. Dr Kirkup recognised that there will be areas of overlap between the work of the sub groups and he hoped that his membership of all three of the sub groups would help reduce duplication of efforts and ensure a consistent approach.

Due to the volume of work requiring review by the expert advisor on obstetrics, the Chairman was looking to strengthen the Panel by selecting an additional advisor on obstetrics to become an Associate to the Panel.

The Chairman explained that the Investigation was currently developing its list of potential interviewees and hoped to begin interviews later in April but that no details had been finalised. When details of the interview programme are confirmed, interviewees would be advised and details would be posted onto the Investigation website.

In light of the significant volume of material received – and anticipated – the Chairman had written to the Secretary of State for Health explaining that meeting the July deadline to submit his report would be unachievable. The Secretary of State has therefore approved a short extension and asked that the Chairman submit his Report in November.

The Chairman then invited questions from those present and there was a general discussion on the issues he had shared with the families.