

NEWSLETTER

Issue 4 - Winter 2021/22



Foreword from Lord Brodie

The Inquiry has now completed its first session of hearings. Over five weeks we heard from young people and their parents and families at the Royal Hospital for Children in Glasgow; and parents of patients at the former Royal Hospital for Sick Children and the Department of Clinical Neurosciences in Edinburgh. Their testimony has been very powerful and will provide a useful reference point as the Inquiry progresses. I am extremely grateful to those who provided this evidence.

This first session has been about the patients' and families' experiences and perceptions. I plan to return to consideration of the patients' experience at a further session in the latter part of 2022. At that time, I would hope to hear representations from other interested parties in the light of the testimony provided by the patients and their families. I will be particularly interested to learn what has been done in the light of events spoken to by the families.

While the focus of the session of hearings in the latter part of 2022 will be on the Glasgow hospital, in the earlier part of the year I plan that there should be hearings in relation to the new Royal Hospital for Children and Young People in Edinburgh, and in particular in relation to the issue of ventilation.

When talking about plans for hearings next year, what I cannot forget is the amount of work involved in investigating what evidence should lead at these hearings. Indeed, what comes to mind when thinking about that work is the image of the iceberg with only a tenth of its mass visible above the water, while nine tenths are out of sight below the surface.

The public hearings form the more visible part of the Inquiry's work but by far the larger part of that work is made up of the process of investigation. That process inevitably takes time, but that time should not be longer than is absolutely necessary.

With the assistance of the Inquiry Team, I therefore intend to do everything that I can to encourage the core participants and others who are in a position to do so, to assist the Inquiry by producing relevant documents and identifying relevant witnesses, and to do so as quickly as practicable and in a way that the Inquiry can immediately use the information.

**Lord Brodie
Chair**

First diet of hearing for the Inquiry concluded

Over five weeks from 20 September to 05 November 2021, the Inquiry heard evidence from families and patients affected by the issues at the hospitals. This was the culmination of months of planning, information gathering and interview.

Patients and their families had the opportunity to set out their concerns and experiences publicly. They did so with dignity and courage. We are grateful to those who have been willing to revisit difficult and traumatic periods with the Inquiry, and openly share their experiences. Their contribution matters and will assist the Inquiry's work as it progresses.

The Inquiry was the first in Scotland to fully live-stream its proceedings, except where a Restriction Order had been granted. This was a decision that was taken very early on. This approach ensured that we were able to meet the requirement of accessibility under the Inquiries Act 2005, by giving everyone the opportunity to view live or recorded evidence as well as ensure that disruption to the Inquiry due to the pandemic was minimised.

Evidence we heard from patients and families has raised some new questions, which we will consider to determine whether these are relevant to our [Terms of Reference](#) and if so, to investigate further.

Closing statements from counsel to the Inquiry and from core participants with leave to appear were submitted to Lord Brodie in December to consider.



All closing statements are now available on our website [here](#).



Recordings of testimonies are available on our [YouTube channel](#). Transcripts, witness statements and Inquiry procedures and protocols can all be found our [website](#) .

Witness experience at the Hearing

All staff who were directly involved with witnesses took part in a trauma informed practice workshop with the aim of ensuring the experience of our witnesses was as comfortable as possible.

The Inquiry welcomed consultant clinical psychologists Dr Judi Bolton and Dr Sarah Weldon to its offices before the September 2021 hearing, where we learned the importance of giving people choice to help them feel safe and empowered in situations such as giving evidence. The trauma informed approach gave witnesses a sense of control in the process, led to trust and better collaboration.

Each witness was supported by a dedicated witness support team member, whom they had built a relationship with over a number of months. Many witnesses who gave oral evidence at the hearing commented that they appreciated being given a tour of the hearing room and facilities beforehand, as well as a chance to meet with counsel ahead of their session, which helped them calm their nerves and feel more at ease while giving evidence.



In addition, thought was given to the design of the hearing room layout where the use of a large circular table around which the Chair, counsel and witnesses would sit, minimised any appearance of a court room setting.

Learning from and working with other Inquiries

No two inquiries are the same. Most notably, each works to different remits and Terms of Reference (ToR), investigating diverse topics and issues. There are currently four active inquiries in Scotland, with a fifth on the Covid-19 pandemic announced recently.

However, one big similarity is that each one has to be set up as a completely new entity, recruiting all necessary staff including the chair or panel, counsel, legal, research, witness support and operational teams; finding premises and designing hearing rooms to facilitate an inquisitorial style of questioning.

With that in mind, the Scottish Hospitals Inquiry found it helpful to engage with others such as the Sheku Bayoh Inquiry in Scotland, the Infected Blood Inquiry and the upcoming Scottish and UK Covid-19 inquiries, among others.

Having a supportive network that understands the challenges faced by inquiries has been helpful in navigating its various stages from set up, running hearings, or day-to-day operations.

Once an inquiry is dissolved, our lessons learned and expertise will be dispersed. Our inquiry and others are all conscious of the need to collectively work together to ensure best practices are developed and recorded, providing a blueprint for the establishment of any future inquiries.

Modern Apprentices at the Inquiry

The Inquiry was pleased to welcome three Modern Apprentices (MAs) who joined us on 11 October in time for the last two weeks of our first diet of hearings.

Over a 12-month period, the MAs will combine a SVQ Level 3 qualification with on-the-job experience. They will rotate every four months across the Operation and Delivery Team, Documents and Evidence Management Team and Legal team.

They are rising to this challenge and are already valued members of the Inquiry, thriving on gaining new knowledge, learning new skills and working with different stakeholders.

Working closely with our third party assessor, Limelight, we provide the MAs with a comprehensive learning and development programme to enable them to reach their full potential. The MAs are fully supported in Scottish Government by a Line Manager, Work Manager and Buddy.

When they receive their qualification, as permanent members of staff they will have the choice of applying for positions within the Inquiry or the wider Scottish Government.

They've shared their thoughts on the experience so far:

It's a great opportunity to learn, there have been challenges along the way but the support is incredible and pleased to say it has been very enjoyable - so far!

Learning through work much better than sitting in classroom.

What attracted me particularly about this job was being able to try a variety of roles so I know exactly what my strengths are and what I'm most interested in.

If you have any relevant information that would help the Inquiry's investigations, please email us: public@hospitalsinquiry.scot and we get back to you as soon as possible.

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