

Inquiry Chairman provides an update in relation to the Inquiries work on 26th July 2021

26 July 2021

Press Release 26th July 2021

Independent Neurology Inquiry Chairperson Provides Update

As Chairman of the Independent Neurology Inquiry, I want to update those most affected by our work as to the stage now reached by the Inquiry.

Since being converted to a statutory Inquiry in December 2020, I have used my statutory powers to obtain all the documents/evidence the Inquiry required. In addition, we have received oral and written evidence from patients or relatives of former patients. The last scheduled oral evidence hearing took place in June 2021.

There are a few discrete pieces of written evidence which will be with the Inquiry shortly.

That said, the Inquiry Panel remains willing to hear from patients or family members of patients through the completion of the questionnaire which is available on the Inquiry's website, www.neurologyinquiry.org.uk (external link opens in a new window / tab), or by telephoning 028 90 251133.

The Inquiry Panel has found such evidence invaluable, and it has informed all our work.

However, we have reached the stage when it is necessary to put a deadline on responses to the questionnaires. For that reason, I would ask that any further questionnaires be submitted to the Inquiry no later than 5pm on 26th August 2021. This will give an additional month for patients and families of former patients to provide written evidence.

We will then consider any additional submissions.

We will allow anyone potentially criticised in the report the opportunity to respond to the issues raised before finalising the report and delivering it to the Minister of Health.

From the outset of the Inquiry, before its conversion, we have believed it important to understand all the issues before hearing from Dr Watt and therefore we always envisaged that he would be our last witness. A witness summons was served on Dr Watt in March 2021.

The Inquiry Panel has carefully considered specialist reports provided to them addressing Dr Watt's unfitness to give evidence. The Inquiry also obtained an independent specialist's opinion who agreed that Dr Watt is not fit to give evidence.

I believe that we have explored all reasonable options to facilitate Dr Watt's involvement. We have, however, concluded that Dr Watt's unfitness to give evidence does not significantly impact upon the Inquiry's ability to address its Terms of Reference, which has a focus on governance.

We understand that this may distress or disappoint some patients and their families given the recalls that have taken place. The fact that this Inquiry cannot hear from Dr Watt does not prevent us from answering the questions we were asked to consider. It is important to note that the Inquiry is not responsible for making decisions in relation to the clinical practice of Dr Watt, which is the responsibility of the General Medical Council.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The Inquiry Terms of Reference are [Independent Neurology Inquiry Terms of Reference 11-12- 2020.pdf](#)(external link opens in a new window / tab)
2. The Inquiry Panel comprises Mr Brett Lockhart QC as Chairperson and Professor Hugo Mascie-Taylor as Co-Panellist.
3. The Minister for Health converted the Inquiry from a non-statutory public inquiry to a statutory public inquiry in December 2020. The Chairman's statement in relation to conversion refers: [Independent Neurology Inquiry Chairman s Statement 11-01-2021.PDF](#)(external link opens in a new window / tab)
4. To date the Inquiry has met on 153 occasions, received evidence on 212 occasions from witnesses and considered 137,000 pages of evidence.
5. A witness summons was served on Dr Watt on 15th March 2021. A medical report was subsequently forwarded by Dr Watt's legal representatives indicating that Dr Watt was not medically fit to give evidence on 6th May 2021. The Inquiry identified a number of misapprehensions by the report author about how the Inquiry conducts its work and what exactly would be required of Dr Watt. On 18th May 2021, the Chairperson wrote to Dr Watt's lawyers clarifying the position, and directed that a further specialist medical report be

obtained in light of the clarification provided. A further report was duly furnished on 22nd June 2021. This took into account the matters raised by the Chairman and reached the same conclusion: that Dr Watt was unfit to give evidence. The Chairman decided to seek a separate and independent specialist medical assessment, which was received on 30th June 2021 and which also concluded that Dr. Watt was not medically fit to give evidence.

6. There are a number of other reviews and investigations ongoing in relation to Neurology Services. Pages 4 to 7 of the Guide to the Questionnaire provides further information: [Guide-to-INI-Questionnaire-26-07-2021 \(PDF 926 KB\)\(external link opens in a new window / tab\)](#)
7. For technical queries contact the Inquiry Secretary on 07966 897 435, info@neurologyinquiry.org.uk. For media queries contact Tom Kelly on 07767 393250.