
Written Ministerial Statement

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HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Public Inquiry into the Clostridium Difficile Outbreak in Northern Health and Social Care Trust Hospitals in 2007-08

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The Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr McGimpsey): On 14 October 2008 I advised the Assembly that I would order a public inquiry into the outbreak of Clostridium difficile in Northern Trust hospitals that occurred between June 2007 and August 2008.

The inquiry will be conducted under the terms of the Inquiries Act 2005.

In accordance with section 6 of the Act I am now advising the Assembly of the membership of the inquiry panel, and of the terms of the reference for the inquiry.

The inquiry will be chaired by Dame Deirdre Hine, former Chief Medical Officer for Wales.

I have also appointed the following three persons to serve on the inquiry panel:

Dr Jocelyn Cornwell, an independent healthcare consultant; Mrs Eleanor Hayes, former Director of Nursing and Governance at Belfast City Hospital Trust and Green Park Hospitals Trust; and Professor Robert Stout, formerly Professor of Geriatric Medicine at Queen's University of Belfast, Dean of QUB Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, and Director of Research and Development for Northern Ireland Health and Social Care.

The Terms of Reference, which I have agreed with the Chairperson of the inquiry, are as follows.

1 The Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety has ordered that a public inquiry be conducted into the outbreak of Clostridium difficile infection that occurred in Northern Health and Social Care hospitals between 16 June 2007 and 31 August 2008.

2 The purpose of the inquiry is:

- (1) to establish how many deaths occurred in Northern Health and Social Care Trust hospitals during the outbreak, for which Clostridium difficile was the underlying cause of death, or was a condition contributing to death;

and

- (2) to examine and report on the experiences of patients and others who were affected directly by the outbreak, and to make recommendations accordingly.

3 The inquiry will be conducted under the terms of the Inquiries Act 2005.

4 The inquiry panel should report to the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, within twelve months of beginning the inquiry, unless otherwise determined by the Minister.