

MAHI Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry

CHAIR'S UPDATE AND STATEMENT IN RELATION TO PLANNED HEARING SESSIONS

ISSUED ON 27 APRIL 2022

I last issued an update as to progress on 22 February 2022. As we approach the first hearing sessions of this Inquiry I would like to provide some further information about the progress of the Inquiry and potential sitting dates.

On hearing days the Inquiry will sit between 10 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. with suitable breaks during the day. The Inquiry will not sit on Fridays unless exceptional circumstances arise. The Inquiry will not sit on Bank Holidays or special holidays such as the Queen's Jubilee (2 and 3 June 2022).

CORE PARTICIPANTS

The list of Core Participants now includes:

- A number of individuals associated with Action against Muckamore and the Society of Parents and Friends of Muckamore Abbey Hospital
- The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- The Department of Health
- The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)
- The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)

DOCUMENT PROVISION AND STATEMENTS

A large number of documents have now been provided by relevant providers and are being analysed by the Inquiry team. Extensions for the provision of some further documentation have been granted.

One hundred and nine potential witnesses have now been in contact with the Inquiry. The statement taking process is progressing and all Phase One witnesses (those giving evidence about the treatment of patients at MAH) have now been contacted¹ and statement taking is progressing, although more slowly than we would wish. As a

¹ With the exception of those represented by Phoenix Law who have requested that all communication is dealt with by them

result it will not be possible to start evidential hearings as early as we wanted to. We will however be in a position to hear some live evidence in June this year.

THE POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE

To ensure that there are clear lines of communication and understanding and so that any danger of disruption to the current police investigation or prosecutions is minimised, a memorandum of understanding has now been agreed between the Inquiry, the PSNI and the Public Prosecution Service which can be found on our [website](#).

THE INQUIRY BUILDING

The Inquiry building at Corn Exchange, Gordon Street, Belfast has now been equipped appropriately for hearings to take place. Audio visual systems have been erected and we are in the process of appointing our Stenographers.

The Inquiry will be live streaming hearings via the Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry [website](#).

The transcription service will provide a simultaneous transcript giving users a number of facilities to order and retain relevant passages of evidence.

Systems will be in place to allow witnesses to give evidence remotely and, where necessary, anonymously.

The Inquiry Building will first open to the public on 23 May 2022.

Week commencing 23 May 2022

This week will be reserved for Core Participants, witnesses and members of the public to view the Inquiry hearing rooms and facilities by arrangement with the Secretary to the Inquiry. We would encourage any witnesses or potential witnesses to arrange with the Secretary to the Inquiry a time to familiarise themselves with the hearing room and the process for hearing days (there will however be further opportunities for witnesses to do so). The Solicitor to the Inquiry and junior counsel will also be present to assist in this process.

Core Participants will be invited to attend to ensure that any laptop or other electronic device they intend to use during the hearings will work with the Inquiry transcription system. The Inquiry will be transcribing the evidence and we would encourage Core Participants to attend and ensure their devices are capable of using that system during this week. Contact should be made with the Secretary to the Inquiry to make such arrangements.

Week commencing 6 June 2022

Chair's opening remarks, ground rules as to use of hearing room and introductions to the Panel.

Counsel to the Inquiry opening address.

Core participant opening addresses (optional and restricted to one hour each).

Week commencing 13 June 2022

Remainder of Core Participant opening addresses (if any).

Closed sessions for viewing of CCTV footage by panel.

Week commencing 27 June 2022

Oral evidence.

Week commencing 4 July 2022

Oral evidence.

RECOMMENCEMENT

The Inquiry will start again in September and conclude hearings for 2022 on 8 December.

Specific hearing weeks will be announced at the end of the hearing in July.

The Inquiry team looks forward to welcoming you in the week of the 23 May 2022 to view the Inquiry premises but please ensure you inform the Secretary to the Inquiry Jaclyn Richardson in advance of your attendance.

Tom Kark QC

Chair

27 April 2022