

CHAIR'S UPDATE ON PROGRESS AND HEARINGS

ISSUED ON 11 AUGUST 2022

1. I last issued an update on 20 June 2022 prior to the commencement of oral evidence at the Inquiry. I hope it is helpful to provide this further brief update on progress and on the schedule for September and October 2022.
2. From 27 June to 6 July 2022, the Inquiry heard oral evidence from ten witnesses and the statements of two further witnesses were read in to the record.
3. The next scheduled hearing day is Tuesday 20 September 2022. It is hoped to hear oral evidence from Tuesday 20 to Thursday 22 September and from Monday 26 to Thursday 29 September. It is then anticipated to hear further evidence in weeks commencing 10, 17 and 24 October 2022. The Inquiry does not sit on Fridays.
4. This first phase of evidence relates to the patient experience. It will be recalled that the Inquiry invited persons who can assist the Inquiry to make contact with the Inquiry using a contact form. To date, 170 persons have made contact with the Inquiry in this way. The Inquiry's statement team has been asked to take statements from those witnesses who can assist with the Inquiry's terms of reference.
5. The process of taking statements has gathered significant momentum since we broke for the summer. The Inquiry is now in receipt of statements from around 50 witnesses.
6. Not all those who have made statements will necessarily be called to give evidence. Some statements may be read into evidence. It may in some instances transpire that a statement does not assist the Inquiry, in which case it will not be necessary to receive the statement formally in evidence.
7. The Inquiry team is currently compiling the witness schedules for the dates noted above. It will be appreciated that this work needs to be undertaken well in advance of the witnesses being called, in order that witnesses are given sufficient notice of the date on which they will be called, that due consideration is given to any special arrangements that may be required to assist witnesses and that the Inquiry team is afforded adequate time for preparation for the hearings.

8. The Inquiry hopes to publish the schedule for the September hearings by Friday 26 August 2022 and for the October hearings by Friday 23 September 2022.
9. I want to make some general observations on this phase of the evidence. It is clear that, having regard to the number of witnesses from whom the Inquiry will be hearing, this phase of evidence will not be completed by the end of October 2022. We will continue to hear from witnesses about the patient experience in November and perhaps December 2022.
10. As Chair, I am conscious of the need to ensure that the Inquiry is conducted efficiently and effectively. With that in mind, the Inquiry team and I wish to make every effort to have this phase of the evidence completed by the end of 2022.
11. I wish to emphasise to all involved in the gathering of evidence for this phase, whether in the giving and taking of statements or in the representation of witnesses, that the exercise needs to be conducted expeditiously to enable the target above to be met. As I said in my opening remarks, there is only one firm of solicitors authorised to take statements on the Inquiry's behalf and that is Cleaver Fulton Rankin. It is important that they are allowed to go about their task without hindrance or unnecessary delay.
12. It may be that there will be some overspill from this phase that will have to be accommodated early in the new year, but I am mindful of the need to move on at the earliest reasonable opportunity to the next phase of evidence. In that phase, the Inquiry hopes to hear from members of staff, including nurses, healthcare assistants, doctors and others who have direct experience of patient care. The arrangements for taking statements from those witnesses will continue in parallel to the hearing of oral evidence from first phase witnesses.
13. In addition to the above, the Inquiry team is continuing with its other work, including the extensive engagement that is necessary to ensure that the Inquiry obtains all the documentation that it needs to address the terms of reference.
14. Finally, I and the panel members hope that all involved in the Inquiry are managing to have a good summer and we look forward to the resumption of the hearings.

Tom Kark QC

Chair

11 August 2022