

Information on Resettlement to Inform Recommendations Issued by direction of the Chair on 21 March 2025

A. Introduction

1. This note provides details of the process which will be used by the Panel to receive further information about recent and ongoing experience of resettlement. The purpose of this exercise is to inform the Panel's recommendations in its final report.
2. The Panel has heard evidence for the purpose of addressing paragraph 16 of the Terms of Reference, which requires the Panel to examine the adequacy and workings of the policy and process of discharge and resettlement of patients of Muckamore Abbey Hospital (MAH). That evidence, relating to the Inquiry's timeframe of 02 December 1999 to 14 June 2021, was heard and completed during the Inquiry's four phases of evidence.
3. The Panel is not required by paragraph 24 of the Terms of Reference to make recommendations on the matter of resettlement. The Panel is, however, enabled by section 24(1) of the Inquiries Act 2005 to make any recommendations it sees fit to make despite not being required to do so by the Terms of Reference.
4. The Panel is conscious of the ongoing concerns of patients' families at how the process of resettlement is working for them. Having regard to those concerns, the Panel is considering making recommendations in respect of this process and it wishes to receive further information on resettlement arising from current and recent experience. This is to ensure that any such recommendations would be informed by contemporary experience.
5. Concerns about resettlement have been communicated to the Inquiry on behalf of Core Participants within Action for Muckamore, the Society of Parents and Friends of Muckamore and Core Participants in Group 3 (families not affiliated to those groups).
6. The Inquiry issued those Core Participants with a paper titled "Information Sessions on the Process of Resettlement and Available Community Services (Both Residential and Day Services)" on 28 October 2024. That paper set out the Panel's preliminary view as to how the information sought for the purpose of its recommendations should be received.
7. Those Core Participants were invited to provide any suggestions as to how the Panel's proposed process might be modified or adapted. The Panel has

received those suggestions and considered them carefully before settling on the process set out below.

8. The Chair, having regard to section 17 of the Inquiries Act 2005, is satisfied that this is the appropriate and fair method of receiving the information sought and directs that the process below be adopted in order to complete this aspect of the Inquiry's work.

B. Process for receiving information on resettlement

9. The information sought is of recent and ongoing experience outside the timeframe of the Terms of Reference, namely in the period since 14 June 2021. The information provided must also relate to the resettlement of a patient from MAH; this is not an information gathering exercise on the general topic of resettlement.
10. As the Chair has indicated, the information will not be received by way of formal evidence sessions or formal witness statements.
11. The Inquiry will encourage as many individuals as possible to come forward to assist the Panel with this exercise. The exercise will not be limited to Core Participant patients and their families or to witnesses who have given evidence at the Inquiry. The invitation to participate will extend to anyone with recent (after 14 June 2021) or ongoing experience of resettlement related to MAH.
12. The Panel's proposed approach to receiving the information was by way of small group sessions in which participants could speak openly to the Panel about their experiences with the assistance of a facilitator. The Panel acknowledges, however, that some participants may prefer not to speak in the presence of others or may wish to convey their experiences in writing rather than orally.
13. The Inquiry will therefore provide three methods to contributors for receipt of information. Those who choose to assist the Inquiry will be asked to indicate which of the three methods they would prefer to use.
14. The three methods of participating are:
 - i. Small group session to discuss experiences before the Panel.
 - ii. Attendance alone to speak of experiences to the Panel.
 - iii. The provision of a written note to Panel in a format prescribed by the Inquiry.
15. The first method will involve groups of between two and five participants who will be invited to discuss their experiences before the Panel.

16. A facilitator appointed by the Inquiry will assist in focusing the discussion and will ensure that everyone who wishes to speak will have the opportunity of doing so. The Panel will listen to the discussion and may ask questions as appropriate. Each session will be scheduled to allow appropriate time according to the number in each group.
17. The second method is for the benefit of those who are content to speak to the Panel but who do not wish to share their experiences in the presence of others. As with the group sessions, a facilitator will be made available by the Inquiry to assist if required.
18. The sessions will take place at the Inquiry premises at Corn Exchange, Belfast in an appropriate room. The timing of the sessions will be set as appropriate by the Panel, having regard to the preliminary indication given by participants of the information that they can provide.
19. Each participant who assists using the first or second method will be permitted to bring one person in support to the session.
20. The Inquiry will fund reasonable expenses for travel and subsistence for participants and (if applicable) the supporter attending the sessions.
21. The only persons present at each session will normally be: the Panel, the Secretary to the Inquiry, the facilitator, the stenographer, the participants in the session and their supporter (if they elect to bring a supporter).
22. Those who wish to use the third method, by provision of a note to the Panel, will be invited to set out in writing and in their own words a summary of their experiences and to identify any particular matters to which they feel the Panel ought to have regard when considering recommendations. Copies of any relevant letters or other documents that a participant wishes to bring to the Panel's attention can be enclosed with the note.
23. If anyone needs assistance in preparing their note, a member of the Inquiry's administrative team will arrange a meeting at the participant's convenience and will provide assistance accordingly.
24. It will also be open to those individuals using the oral sessions to provide the Panel in advance with a note of their experiences (and copies of any relevant letters or other documents that they wish to bring to the Panel's attention).
25. The Panel would encourage those using the third method to focus on the core issues that they have encountered and that they wish the Panel to consider. Ideally, the note should be no more than four pages, but the Panel will understand if that limit is not strictly adhered to.
26. The information sessions will not be held in public. The information provided either in group or individual sessions will be recorded and transcribed. Subject

to any necessary restriction, an appropriate record of the sessions (and written notes) will be provided to Core Participants.

27. The Chair will consider how the information received in the sessions (or by way of written note) may be published. In doing so, the Chair will have regard as appropriate to the views of participants.
28. The anonymity of patients will be protected in accordance with Restriction Order No. 2 and the Chair will be mindful of any further restrictions that may be necessary.
29. Restrictions on access to the sessions and/ or information received in the sessions will be imposed in accordance with section 19 of the Inquiries Act 2005.
30. The Panel will consider whether to invite written submissions from Core Participants in relation to the information received in this exercise.
31. The invitation to participants is being posted on the Inquiry's website. All those who wish to participate must complete the initial contact form. The Inquiry will provide assistance with completion of the form on request.
32. Only those who are in a position to provide information about resettlement related to Muckamore in the period since 14 June 2021 will be asked to assist with the exercise, in accordance with their preferred method of participation.

C. Timetable

33. The exercise will be conducted in strict accordance with the following timetable:

21 March 2025:	Publication of this note on the Inquiry's website accompanied by link to contact form for completion by persons with relevant information.
25 April 2025:	Final date for provision to Inquiry of completed contact form.
09 May 2025:	Issue of invitations by Inquiry (a) to contributors to oral sessions, providing details of scheduled attendance at an information session and (b) to those who wish to provide a note only rather than attend sessions.
23 May 2025:	Final date for provision of notes to Inquiry (including any notes to be provided by those attending oral sessions).
w/c 02 June 2025:	Reserved for oral information sessions.

D. Conclusion

34. The Panel wishes to emphasise that, while this exercise will not involve formal statements or evidence sessions for the purpose of its consideration of the Terms of Reference, it is mindful of the ongoing importance of the issue to many families. It is for this reason that the Panel is considering the issue as suitable for recommendations, even though this is not required by paragraph 24 of the Terms of Reference.

35. The Panel is very grateful to those who are prepared to assist. This is an opportunity to assist the Panel in its consideration of suitable recommendations in relation to the issue of resettlement. The information received will be used solely for that purpose. Importantly, participation in this exercise is entirely voluntary.

MAH Inquiry
21 March 2025