

Witness Name: Aidan Dawson

Statement No.: WITN7561001

Exhibits: None

Dated: 25 November 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF AIDAN DAWSON

I provide this statement in response to the request for information from the Infected Blood Inquiry pursuant to Rule 9(2) of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 16 March 2020.

Section 1: Introduction

1. I am Aidan Dawson, Chief Executive of the Public Health Agency Northern Ireland and I am duly authorised to make this statement on its behalf.

Section 2: Response

2. A description of the methodology used to perform the searches conducted on electronic and paper-based legacy records that were transferred to the PHA and were searched as part of the response to the Inquiry dated 22 March 2019. Please include details of all those persons and departments contacted and their response.

- a. Upon receipt of the Inquiry's correspondence the then Interim Director of Public Health, Dr Adrian Mairs, asked Planning and Project Manager Jim Crawford to liaise with relevant staff to prepare the Agency's response in conjunction with Robert Graham, Chief Executive Office Manager.
- b. Jim Crawford contacted each of the Public Health Assistant Directors to ask them to conduct searches within their own areas, as well as in each of the regional PHA offices.
- c. In the PHA's southern office in Armagh, a search was carried out of electronic and hard copy records on site and records held offsite by Oasis. This did not yield any results. Senior Health Improvement officers and administrative staff were involved in the searches.
- d. In the PHA's western office in Londonderry, a search was carried out of electronic and hard copy records. This yielded the Health Protection documents that were listed in our response of 22 March 2019. Senior Health Improvement officers and administrative staff were involved in the searches.

- e. In the PHA's northern office in Ballymena, a meeting was held between Dr Gerry Waldron, Assistant Director of Health Protection, Health Protection consultants and a Senior Health Improvement Officer and following this meeting a Health Protection consultant, along with the Office Manager and secretarial staff undertook searches of manual files, e-mails and offsite storage. These searches did not yield any results.
- f. In the PHA's main office in Linenhall Street, searches were carried out of electronic and paper records by Robert Graham and the Director of Public Health's PA, Libby Jones. Legacy records were recalled from Oasis which yielded the results which were submitted to the Health and Social Board in December 2018, and which were referenced in the PHA's response to the Inquiry on 22 March 2019.
- g. Jim Crawford also conducted a trawl of almost 500 containers of off-site storage and this yielded only one result, the AIDs incident which was referred to in the correspondence of 22 March 2019 and 20 December 2019.
- h. Searches were also conducted by staff within the Service Development and Screening Team by Service Development consultants and senior programme staff. No results were found. Within the Research and Development team, searches were conducted by one of the Programme Managers, and this yielded the results referred to the letter of 22 March 2019 and the information forwarded to the Inquiry on 20 December 2019.

3. With reference to the written statement of Valerie Watts dated 18 December 2018 for the Regional Health and Social Care Board, please confirm whether:

3.1 the record management policies outlined also apply to the PHA and, if they do not, please explain the record management policies which apply to the PHA;

- a. The PHA has similar records management policies to those of HSCB and they are based on the principles of the Department of Health guidance known as "Good Management Good Records".

3.2 any legacy organisations records relevant to the PHA's work are archived in the same repositories as are the Regional Health and Social Care Board.

- a. The PHA's legacy records are held in either PHA offices or in offsite storage through a third party organisation, Oasis.

4. In relation to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre for Northern Ireland (CDSCNI), please explain:

4.1 the establishment, role and work of CDSCNI;

- a. CDSC(NI) was established in 1999 based at Belfast City Hospital under the remit of the Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland, but part of the Health Protection Agency (HQ) London which is now known as Public Health England (PHE). CDSC (NI) was established to provide an enhance surveillance function and service for notifiable diseases.

- b. All Notification of Infectious Diseases (NOIDs) forms were forwarded to the Northern Ireland Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre CDSC (NI) where the information was entered onto a secure database, validated (using laboratory reports and anti-microbial resistance information), updated and analysed. The information was then used for inclusion in national and European and WHO reports, as well as for disease surveillance at a local level.
- c. The CDSC(NI) became part of the PHA on 1 October 2010 as part of the Health Protection function.

4.2 any predecessor organisations carrying out the function of CDSCNI;

- a. There was no predecessor organisation carrying out the function of CDSCNI. Prior to its establishment of CDSCNI, a Senior Medical Officer within the Department of Health had among his responsibilities a remit for communicable disease.

4.3 the current storage of CDSCNI records;

- a. All manual/electronic records from CDSC (NI) were transferred into a PHA storage facility. All records from CDSC (NI) that are held were checked as per the terms of reference for the Inquiry.

4.4 the methodology used for the 'trawl of legacy records' as stated in the response dated 22 March 2019.

- a. As per the initial response provided dated 22nd March 2019 the terms of reference used were as per the Infected Blood Inquiry guidelines and all manual and electronic records that were held from CDSC (NI) that are with the PHA were trawled and possible records identified as previously communicated.

5. In the Rule 9 response dated 22 March 2019, the PHA advised that one CDSCNI file of potential relevance was held by PHA (A0191550 – AIDs Incident 09/10/2012). Please confirm that this is the only CDSCNI file concerning AIDs, HIV and Hepatitis B and C viruses.

- a. File reference: A0191550 AIDs Incident in Southern Health & Social Care Trust (SHSCT): As previously mentioned this is the only file identified in relation to the TOR of the Infected blood Inquiry. This incident was reported to CDSC (NI) by colleagues in the SHSCT which would form part of their SHSCT disclosure to the Infected Blood Inquiry as they were the original reporting authority.

6. Although the Inquiry acknowledges that some of the background on the establishment of the PHA was provided in your Rule 9 responses dated 11 October 2018 and 22 March 2019, further detail is still required. To provide the Inquiry with a complete understanding please provide an expanded account of

the organisations and functions that were transferred to the Public Health Agency upon its establishment in 2009. In your description please include:

- *any legacy boards;*
 - a. *affiliated entities;*
 - *any relevant groups or committees where secretarial support was provided by the Public Health Agency's predecessors;*
 - *the dates that any predecessor organisations were established, and then ceased to exist;*
 - *the current location of any documentation related to these organisations.*
- a. In terms of legacy Boards, the former Health and Social Services Boards were established under The Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. The 4 Boards came into being on 1 September 1972 and were dissolved on 31 March 2009 under The Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 to create the Regional Health and Social Care Board (known as HSCB). Health protection and health improvement functions from the legacy Boards transferred to the Public Health Agency as well as the nursing and allied health professionals function.
- b. In terms of affiliated entities, the former Central Services Agency was also established under The Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. It came into being on 1 September 1972 and was dissolved on 31 March 2009 under The Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 to form the Business Services Organisation (BSO). The research and development work of the legacy Central Services Agency transferred to the Public Health Agency.
- c. As outlined in question 3 above, the functions of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre for Northern Ireland (CDSCNI) transferred to the Public Health Agency.
- d. Another entity whose functions transferred to the Public Health Agency is the Healthcare-Associated Infection Surveillance Centre (HISC). HISC was established in September 2001 to undertake healthcare-associated infections surveillance at local level in Northern Ireland. Like CDSCNI, its functions transferred into the PHA on 1 October 2010.
- e. The functions of the Health Promotion Agency were also transferred to the Public Health Agency in April 2009. A fuller narrative on its functions is outlined in the response to question 6 below.
- f. Other functions which transferred to the Public Health Agency are the Centre for Connected Health, which was previously located with the Department of Health and the HSC Safety Forum.

Any legacy documentation for any of the organisations outlined above that has been retained by the PHA is held in offsite storage, through PHA's third party records storage provider (Oasis).

7. Please confirm the functions that the Health Promotion Agency of Northern Ireland carried out in the 1990s and where, if any, records for this Agency may be located.

- a. The Health Promotion Agency was established in 1990 and had the following statutory functions:
 - Advising the Department of Health and Social Services on matters relating to health promotion;
 - Undertaking health promotion activity;
 - Sponsoring research and evaluation in relation to health promotion;
 - Assisting in the provision of appropriate training in health promotion;
 - Preparing, publishing and distributing material relevant to health promotion;
 - Providing a regional centre for health promotion information
- b. Archived records for the Health Promotion Agency are held in contracted offsite secure storage (Oasis).

8. Please explain the function of the Public Health Laboratory (Northern Ireland) and the relationship the Laboratory may have had with any organisations preceding the Public Health Agency.

- a. The Northern Ireland Public Health Laboratory had among its public health functions the analysis of food, water and other environmental samples. This work was carried out often at the behest of district council environmental health officers.
- b. The Public Health Laboratory was one of the Northern Ireland hospital laboratories that provided microbiological data to CDSCNI, however it should be noted that it did so as good professional practice rather than because there was a legal requirement to do so. The link between the Laboratory and CDSCNI was a professional one; the organisations were not linked organisationally or managerially.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this written statement are true.

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

25 November 2021