

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Issue date: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

### **C. diff Inquiry moves to the third stage of its work.**

The C.diff Inquiry into the deaths which occurred in Northern Health and Social Care Trust hospitals during an outbreak of C.diff infection is now into its third stage which is the taking of formal written statements from witnesses.

The fourth stage will be when Oral hearings begin in October when the public and the media will have access to these formal proceedings.

The Chairman of the C.diff Inquiry Panel, Dame Deirdre Hine has advised Health Minister Michael McGimpsey of the need to extend the inquiry timeframe for the completion of its work. The requirement for additional time is to take account of the volume of witness statements and the need to ensure that lawyers representing the families and other interested persons have sufficient time to prepare for the Inquiry.

The Inquiry expects that the taking of witness statements will be completed by the end of July with the first of the oral hearings scheduled to begin in October. It is anticipated that the Inquiry Report will be submitted to the DHSSPS Minister by the end of the year.

To date almost 200 people have contributed to the Inquiry's work including bereaved families, former patients and their relatives as well as Trust staff.

The C. diff Inquiry Panel will continue to provide updates at significant stages of its work, through communications with participants, its web site and press information.

The Inquiry can be contacted by calling Kate McClements on 028 90 517124

Or email: [inquiry@cdiffinquiry.org](mailto:inquiry@cdiffinquiry.org)

## **Ends**

For further media information please contact Maria McCann at McCann Public Relations on 02890 666322 or 07802 934246.

### **Notes to editor:**

Inquiry stages:

Stage 1: Awareness raising among those affected and the wider public of the opportunity to participate in the Inquiries work. (Mar 09-July 09).

Stage 2: Information gathering from patients and families affected by the outbreak, staff employed in the affected hospitals. Identification of areas that require close scrutiny by the Inquiry Panel. (April 09- January 10)

Stage 3: Gathering of formal written evidence. (Feb 10-July10)

Stage 4: Oral Hearings hearings. In Oct 2010.

Stage 5: Preparation and submission of Inquiry Report to DHSSPS Minister.

- The issues the Inquiry has been asked to address are firstly, 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. Secondly, what were the experiences of patients and others who were directly affected by the outbreak of C diff infection that occurred in Northern Health and Social Care Trust hospitals between 16 June 2007 and 31 August 2008.
- The Hospitals involved during the outbreak, which took place between 16 June 2007 and 31 August 2008, were Antrim, Braid Valley, Mid Ulster, Moyle and Whiteabbey.
- At the time the C.diff infection levels were identified as an “outbreak” as the levels of infection had exceeded the normal baseline rates.
- It was initially envisaged that the Inquiry would require twelve months to complete all investigations. The number of responses to the Inquiry’s work and the subsequent requirement for legal support for those providing evidence to the Inquiry meant an extension of the time to coordinate legal services for contributors.