



WITNESS STATEMENT FOR

'Public Inquiry into the Outbreak of *Clostridium Difficile* in Northern Trust Hospitals.

Witness Name: Mr Donald McWhirter

Name and Address of Employer: Northern Health and Social Care Trust
The Cottage,
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Job Title: Support Services Manager for Whiteabbey and Moyle Hospitals

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Over the period of the CDiff outbreak in Whiteabbey Hospital I felt that the workload increased greatly for both myself and the staff who I had working for me at that time in the department.

Regarding my own workload I was attending a significantly increased number of meetings with Infection Control, Microbiology and Nursing representatives from the Whiteabbey hospital site as well as from Antrim Area Hospital.

The meetings I was attending involved all of these stakeholders as well as ward managers. The outcome of the meetings would have led to a list of areas that required terminal cleaning as well as regular intensive cleaning such as in a cohort bay or side room. As well it would have been requested of my staff to perform extra cleaning duties in ward sanitary areas as well the staff rooms. At all times I was informed of the priority areas to be cleaned and if I had any queries I felt confident to raise these at any time during the discussions.

I was very aware during these meetings of the seriousness of the outbreak and it was good to see the domestic services staff being recognised for the job they were doing. At each meeting the areas of responsibility were very clear as was the accountability further up the management chain of command.

COMMUNICATION

The information I received was via the meetings I attended. This information was then communicated to my team of supervisors who were made aware of the responsibilities that they had in ensuring the domestic staff knew what to do on a daily basis.

I received further information from my line manager regarding the new cleaning chemicals that were being introduced. This information was then given to all of my staff. This same arrangement was used if cleaning protocols were changed.

The contact with Infection Control was very helpful during this period in that they were able to provide my department with up to date information on a regular basis. This was very helpful as some staff reported to me they were receiving conflicting information when they reported for duty on their ward from that given to them by their supervisor.

I would like to comment that I was invited to all relevant meetings concerning the outbreak and the contribution by my department was greatly recognised by all of the Infection Control Team as well as Dr Kearney.

SUPPORT

Regarding this issue I would comment that the best support my department received was from the Infection Control Team as well as some members of nursing. This helped the morale of my staff as they were very busy throughout this period.

I also received close support from some of my colleagues who were experiencing the same issues on their sites.

My staff worked extremely well throughout this period especially during quite stressful situations such as terminal cleans needing to be completed very quickly and at a moment's notice.

I wish to confirm that the contents of this statement are true.



D. McWhirter

Date 27/9/10