

THE EXPERT REVIEW OF RECORDS OF DECEASED PATIENTS OF DR WATT

MINUTES OF PHASE THREE STEERING GROUP MEETING

Meeting 3 - Held on Monday 19 May 2025 at 10.00 Via MS Teams

Members:	Mrs Lynn Long Dr Nazia Latif Mr Brian O'Hagan Mr Ray Martin Mr Stewart Finn	RQIA Director / SRO / Chair RQIA Authority Board Ethical Advisor / PPI Lay Representative Director of MS Society / Vice Chair of NINCA
In Attendance:	Mrs Linda Rafferty Dr Leanne Morgan Mr Malachy Finnegan Mr Sean Green	Project Lead Clinical Lead Senior Communications Manager Project Support Officer (taking minutes)
Apologies:	Dr Seamus O'Reilly Professor Stuart Elborn	RQIA Interim Responsible Officer RQIA Authority Board

1.0 Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

Mrs Long welcomed members to the meeting and noted above apologies.

Mrs Rafferty confirmed that the required quorum had been achieved for the meeting to take place as planned.

No conflicts of interest declared. Declaration of interests will remain as a standing item on future agendas.

Action: Mrs Rafferty to send reminder emails to those members who have yet to submit completed declaration of interests forms.

2.0 Steering Group Terms of Reference – updated May 2025

Members accepted the small amendment to the Terms of Reference (ToR) to include Dr Seamus O'Reilly replacing Dr Ian Steele as a member of the group.

3.0 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Steering Group held on 13/12/2024 - for approval

Minutes were reviewed and agreed without amendment.

Action: Mrs Rafferty to liaise with the RQIA Communications team to arrange for the minutes of the previous meeting to be published on the RQIA website.

4.0 Updates on Progress

4.1 Phase 3 Family Information and Support Event

Dr Morgan provided the following update:

Following on from discussions at the Steering Group meeting on 13 December 2024 and further discussions at a Family Liaison Team (FLT) workshop on 19 December 2024, it was agreed to invite the families participating in Phase 3 to an in-person Information and Support Event. The event, which was held in the Europa Hotel, Belfast on 17 February 2025, facilitated by Professor Nichola Rooney, Consultant Clinical Psychologist along with Dr Morgan, Mrs Rafferty and Mr Green as members of the FLT, was attended by 20 family members representing 10 of the 18 Phase 3 families.

The agenda included the following:

- Overview and plans for family meeting with representatives from the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) Expert Review Panel
- What families can expect when they receive RCP individual case summary reports to include:
 - An overview of potential range of outcomes
 - Lived experience of the RCP process leading into further processes
 - Questions and Answer panel
- Looking after your wellbeing throughout the process, and support available
- The value of peer support
- Next steps

Guest speakers included Mr Ray Martin and Mrs Norma Sparkes, both of whom have lived experience of participating in Phase 2 of the Expert Review. Also Mr Brian O'Hagan, who has a wealth of experience of working with people impacted across NI Health and Social Care, and of the values of peer support/networking.

The event, although emotional for everyone in attendance, was very well received and resulted in the families setting up a Whatsapp peer support group with the title Haven for Hope.

4.2 Update on Phase 3 Group 1 x 18 cases

Mrs Rafferty provided the following update:

As at 31 March 2025, the Expert Panel had completed the review of the records and of the testimonies provided by all 18 families participating in Phase 3, henceforth referred to as Phase 3 Group 1. In addition, during March 2025, 15 of the 18 families availed of an opportunity to meet virtually, on an individual family basis, with representatives from the expert review panel, supported by the FLT. This arrangement facilitated a two-way conversation between panel members and individual families, the purpose being to ensure the family's voice is heard, and that their experience is reflected in individual case summary reports.

RCP have provided indicative timescales to take account of a thorough and extensive quality assurance process and has advised that RQIA may expect the case summary reports, along with an overarching report, to be ready by the end of summer/beginning of autumn 2025. Please note, timescales are indicative rather than definitive.

The FLT will keep in regular touch with families during this time.

The FLT are mindful of the potential distress that families may experience when they receive their individual case summary reports, and will therefore ensure that RQIA Clinical Psychologist is present at all engagements and will be reminding family members of the opportunity to avail of independent and confidential counselling sessions through Lena by Inspire Wellbeing, should they wish to do so.

4.3 Further and final phase of the Expert Review

Mrs Rafferty provide the following information:

A total of twelve families had approached RQIA since the Ministerial statement on 03 July 2024 in which a deadline of 31 December 2024 was announced. Three of the families were subsequently discounted given it transpired the deceased relatives had not received care by Dr Watt, and a fourth family made a decision not to participate further with the Expert Review.

Following engagement with the FLT, a total of 8 families confirmed that they wished to have their deceased relatives' cases included in a further phase of the review.

RQIA's Chief Executive conveyed this information to the Department of Health (DoH) via letter on 30 January 2025, including RQIA's proposed approach to a further phase of the Expert Review, and received a response confirming DoH endorsement of approach on 03 February 2025.

In March 2025, RQIA submitted an addendum to the original Business Case seeking additional non-recurrent funding to complete Phase 3, Group 1 x 18 cases, and to commence what will be referred to as Phase 3, Group 2 x 8 cases.

RQIA are currently working closely with DoH colleagues based on the position, in terms of good financial governance, and openness and transparency with interested parties, that receipt of funding allocation letter and an open public acknowledgement of the Health Minister's decision in relation to a further and final phase is critical in advance of initiating activities for this further phase of the review, such as:

- Development and approval of a Direct Award of Contract prior to RQIA formally commissioning the RCP to undertake an Invited Service Review of the clinical records, and family testimonies, of this further phase of the Expert Review;
- Agreeing RCP Terms of Reference for Phase 3, Group 2.
- Re-engaging the FLT to include the Project Lead, Clinical Lead, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Project Support Officer;
- Sign-off of RCP Deed of Indemnity by DoH;
- Updating the RQIA website;
- Further and ongoing engagement with the 8 families, particularly in terms of providing support for families to prepare their testimonies for consideration by the Expert Review Panel and facilitating and supporting virtual meetings between individual families and representatives of the Expert Review Panel;
- Advising key stakeholders, such as HSC Trusts, Dr Watt's legal team, the Patient and Client Council, Coroner's office, PSNI – *please note list not exhaustive*;

- Obtaining deceased patients' records from source organisations such as HSC Trusts and GP notes from BSO, in order to prepare the records for virtual review by the Expert Review Panel.

Discussion ensued regarding the sequencing of publishing the RCP findings of both Groups 1 and 2 of Phase 3 as they become available, and the need to ensure that the undertaking of a further and final phase (Group 2) does not impact negatively on the timeframe for completion of the Group 1 report, to include the sharing of individual case summary reports with families.

Action: Following the public announcement of a further and final phase of the Expert Review, FLT to ensure the families of Phase 3 Group 1 are provided with reassurance as detailed above.

5.0 Communications Update

Mr Finnegan advised that the RQIA Communications Team will continue to work closely with members of the FLT and with the DoH Press Office as required, and during significant junctures such as when the further and final phase of the review is announced publicly, and at the time of publishing the report of findings of Phase 3 Group 1 and Group 2.

6.0 Budget

RQIA are awaiting receipt of formal funding allocation letter from Department of Finance.

7.0 Any Other Business

7.1 Independent Neurology Inquiry (INI) Implementation Programme INI Action Plan

Attendees discussed the above in terms of implementation of recommendations linked to governance.

Action: RQIA to link with the DoH Implementation Team to request an update on actions in terms of governance, e.g. the implementation of Recommendation 14.

7.2 RQIA Legacy Commitments

Dr Morgan advised that work is progressing at pace in relation to the development of two co-produced legacy workstreams, chaired by Dr Latif:

1. An elearning package entitled "Building a Safe and Compassionate Culture within HSC"
2. A Safety Culture Framework

8.0 Next meeting

Next meeting to be held early Autumn, with the option of an extraordinary meeting in advance should this be required.

9.0 Thank you and close

Mrs Long thanked everyone for attending and for their valuable contribution to the meeting.