

## **Statement to Board regarding histopathology services at University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust**

*At the public Board meeting on Tuesday 28 February, Chief Executive Robert Woolley gave the following statement about histopathology services at the Trust:*

“University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (UH Bristol) commissioned an Independent Inquiry in 2009 to review allegations about its Histopathology services and to consider whether appropriate action was taken by the Trust to address these concerns.

“The Independent Inquiry, conducted by a panel of experts and chaired by Jane Mishcon, a leading barrister, published its report and recommendations on 8th December 2010.

“The Independent Inquiry found no evidence to suggest that the histopathology department at UH Bristol provides anything other than a safe service. However, it did raise concerns about the culture, attitude and working practices in the department and criticised the Trust for the quality of its response to concerns about clinical services.

“I issued a public apology on behalf of the Trust Board for the fact that a small number of patients had been harmed as a result of diagnostic mistakes and that concerns about our services were not promptly and thoroughly investigated at the time that they arose.

“The recommendations from the Independent Inquiry are being implemented through an integrated action plan, jointly owned by UH Bristol and North Bristol NHS Trust, which is reported publicly at the Trust Board, at our Membership Council and to the Bristol Health Scrutiny Commission.

“The Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook its own review of histopathology services at UH Bristol in 2011. The CQC found that the Trust was meeting all six of the essential standards of quality and safety which it reviewed. It suggested that the Trust make improvements in three areas in order to maintain compliance and we have set out the actions we are taking in these areas.

“Recently, some alarmist reports have appeared in the media repeating allegations that thousands of diagnostic errors may have been made by the Trust over a ten-year period. These allegations are based on a crude extrapolation from a review of an audit of discrepancy rates submitted to the Independent Inquiry, evaluated by them and made public as part of their report. Patients may be reassured that the author of the review, Professor Peter Furness, President of the Royal College of Pathologists, concluded that, although he detected issues in the working practices in the department, he did not believe the audit identified a systematic pattern of error.

“The Trust has invited the Independent Inquiry panel to return to Bristol shortly to ascertain what progress has been made against their recommendations for improvement. The Trust will publish the outcomes from this review.

“This Trust has undergone unprecedented scrutiny of the quality of its histopathology services over the last two years but has been found to be meeting essential quality and safety standards. Nonetheless, we remain committed to addressing the

recommendations from the Independent Inquiry and will continue to publish our progress.”