

Dear Robert,

Inquiry into Histopathology Services in Bristol

Thank you for inviting the Panel to review the steps taken to address the recommendations made in the Inquiry Report we submitted in December 2010.

We conducted interviews in Bristol on 29 February and 1 March 2012. We are very grateful to everyone who came to see us and for the arrangements made for us to revisit the Histopathology Department. We were very pleased to have been able to talk to patients and relatives as well as members of staff from both Trusts.

We have come to three broad conclusions.

- 1) Both Trusts (UHBT and NBT) are to be congratulated on all that has been achieved so far. We have seen evidence of a genuine commitment to implement our recommendations and evidence of real progress.

We are greatly encouraged by:

- a) The appointment of Dr Rob Pitcher as the Clinical Lead for Cellular Pathology. We are impressed by his experience, ability and commitment. Dr Pitcher has worked extremely hard and effectively to bring about necessary changes and a great deal has been done in a short time, but we are reassured to see that he is also sensitive to the fact that it takes time to adjust to new work cultures and environments. We were very pleased to learn that Dr Pitcher has also been appointed to be the Clinical Lead for the Bristol Pathology Review.
 - b) The appointment of six new consultants, four of whom we met. It is particularly favourable that three of the appointments are in the specialty areas of respiratory and paediatric histopathology, given that these were the two specialties about which the original concerns were raised.
 - c) The establishment of two new consultant posts. Given the very challenging financial outlook, the funding of these posts is evidence of the commitment of the Trust Boards to strengthen and improve the histopathology service in Bristol.
 - d) The steps that have been taken towards the integration of the service across the two trusts.
 - e) The partial upgrading of the BRI histopathology department.
 - f) The introduction of process redesign and the Lean methodology.
- 2) Although much has been done, there is still much to do. We recommend a focus on the following issues:

- a) Keep up the momentum of change and improvement. Culture and attitudes cannot be transformed quickly and it is transformation that is required.
 - b) Resolve the staffing issues in breast histopathology as soon as possible and repatriate to NBT the work currently being done by Source Bioscience. This is of vital importance.
 - c) Make the decision about the future of pathology services in Bristol as soon as possible. The Panel has no view on its location(s) other than, as we recommended, histopathology should operate as a unified service with diagnostic reliability and clinical effectiveness as dominant criteria.
 - d) Fully implement the introduction of sub-specialty teams so that single teams of specialist pathologists are providing histopathology services across Bristol
 - e) Continue the review of MDTs to ensure that the teams are functioning reliably and effectively across the city.
 - f) Implement and audit the agreed procedure for double reporting.
 - g) Keep consultant staffing under review. We anticipate that further consultant posts will be required to ensure a timely diagnostic service in which the histopathologists confine their practice to areas of specialist competence proven by quality assurance and audit.
 - h) Continue to develop the network for paediatric and perinatal pathology with Oxford and Southampton.
 - i) Fund further upgrading of the BRI Department. We recognise that it is important to keep in mind the longer term schemes likely to be required following the Bristol Pathology Review.
- 3) It is imperative that the Trust communicates to the public and to patients the progress which is being made and provides as much detailed supporting evidence of progress as possible. Because of some adversarial relationships that have developed, it may have been difficult to share information as openly as is desirable. However, it is vital that a way is found to overcome this problem. It is not enough to make progress — progress must be seen and felt – particularly by service users.

We again wish to congratulate both Trusts on all that has been achieved. We hope that good progress will continue to be made and that this will be demonstrated to and acknowledged by everyone.

Finally, unless the Trust wishes to consider inviting us to return for a further review of progress, we suggest that the Inquiry Panel is formally disbanded.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Mishcon

Professor Sir James Underwood

Ken Jarrold CBE

Margaret Spittle OBE

Michael Summers