

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN ON THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE MID-STAFFORDSHIRE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST PUBLIC INQUIRY

I could not have produced my reports without the help of the many patients and family members who came forward to tell of their appalling experiences in Stafford. They will not rest until they see action being taken to prevent a repeat of what happened in Stafford and, as we now know, elsewhere. Without them, I doubt very much whether we would be here today. It is they and all who use the NHS day in and day out who have to be persuaded that the measures being announced today will achieve the laudable objectives set out by the Secretary of State.

Since the publication of the report I have been very encouraged by meeting many dedicated healthcare professionals from all parts of the service - doctors, nurses, managers, and trainees, - who want to play their part in making the NHS a uniformly safe and caring place for all their patients. Reassuringly, many in the NHS have not waited until today to get on with much needed changes and initiatives to begin the process of reform.

The public, regulators, commissioners, oversight bodies, as well as the Health Select Committee all also have a crucial role to play in ensuring that those working in the NHS accept the need for change, and work towards it. Many of those organisations have shown they want to respond positively to the report. And today the Government has given a welcome indication of a commitment to play its part in paving the way for a new NHS culture of which we can all be proud.

The other reports commissioned since mine - the reports of Professor Don Berwick, Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, Camilla Cavendish, and Ann Clwyd MP and Professor Tricia Hart - are all consistent with the recommendations that I made and make clear the direction of travel needed to produce the change in culture that I called for.

Much has already changed in the health service. From the front line to the boards of national bodies, things are happening and being done which would have been inconceivable before the Mid Staffordshire inquiries 2 years ago. The system is on its way to becoming more transparent, and shortcomings are more readily admitted and more actively addressed than before. However there is still much to do.

I believe that the proposals being announced today will continue the process started by my report. They will encourage the commitment and enthusiasm of so many in the service to be focussed on what really matters in the NHS: the provision of safe, effective and high quality care to all patients, on each and every occasion they need it. They will contribute to the development of the openness, transparency and candour that will maintain the public's confidence and promote a true partnership with patients.

When I presented the public inquiry report I identified 6 themes lying behind the recommendations, 6 areas in which substantial change and improvement were required:

- Common patient centred values throughout the system
- Fundamental standards setting out requirements of what must be provided to patients each time and every time

- Openness, transparency and candour about harm to patients, and what the service and those in it do well, and not so well
- Compassionate, caring, committed nursing provided by sufficient numbers of effectively recruited, well trained, supported and supervised and, above all well valued nursing staff
- Strong patient centred healthcare leadership provided by leaders who live by the service's common values, and show by everything they do their focus on the needs of their patients.
- Accurate, useful and relevant information allowing the public and all those within the service to understand how safe, effective and good the service being provided is.

Therefore I am glad to welcome what the Secretary of State has announced as being a carefully considered and thorough response to my concerns and my recommendations. Of course not every single line of my recommendations has been accepted. There can be different ways of achieving the same objectives. I believe this announcement does represent a comprehensive collection of measures which, when combined with the enthusiasm and commitment for culture change of NHS staff and the help of patient groups, will contribute greatly towards a new culture of caring and making our hospitals safer places for their patients.

I said, in, presenting my report of the public inquiry;

My recommendations represent not the end but the beginning of a journey towards a healthier culture in the NHS in which good practice in one place is not considered to be a reason for ignoring poor practice somewhere else; where personal responsibility is not thought to be satisfied by a belief that someone else is taking care of it; where protecting and serving patients is the conscious purpose of everything everyone thinks about day in day out.

Today is a step on that journey, and as with any travel, the plans and means of reaching the destination will need to be kept under constant review. Today is an important step on that journey, but, as the Secretary of State accepts, progress in making these changes needs to be kept under review, not only by the Government but by all healthcare organisations, not least the hospital trusts which are to report back by the end of the year. Let us all hope that in the near future we will stop having to listen to disturbing reports of poor and unsafe care in many different places and instead be looking at a service which has learned from the mistakes, and has ensured that the excellent practice we know exists in many places becomes the norm everywhere. Only then can we rest assured that the lessons of Mid Staffordshire have truly been learned.