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Lewis Macdonald MSP  
Convener  
Health and Sport Committee

By Email.

4 October 2019

Dear Lewis,

**Meetings with families of paediatric cancer patients treated at the Royal Hospital for Children and the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital**

Today I have provided an update to Parliament on my meetings on Saturday 28 September and Tuesday 1 October with a number of families of paediatric cancer patients, and some young patients themselves, who have been treated at the Royal Hospital for Children and Queen Elizabeth University Hospital. I was able to listen directly to their concerns and hear of the impact of the infection outbreaks which have affected patients at these hospitals.

Some of the questions raised by the families will be answered by the Independent Review I commissioned in January and which I expect to report by Spring next year and by the Public Inquiry I announced on 18 September. But many are pressing now and will be answered and resolved in the coming weeks. In my update to Parliament (Attached) I set out the actions being taken in follow-up to these meetings.

I will continue to take a close interest in the progress made against the issues and concerns families raised, and will update you on that progress.

Kind Regards,



**JEANE FREEMAN**

**S5W-25642**

**To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with families of paediatric cancer patients affected by the infection outbreaks at the Royal Hospital for Children and the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde?**

Answer:

On Saturday 28 September and Tuesday 1 October 2019 I met with a number of families of paediatric cancer patients, and some young patients themselves who have been treated at the Royal Hospital for Children and Queen Elizabeth University Hospital. I was able to listen directly to their concerns and hear of the impact of the infection outbreaks which have affected some patients at these hospitals.

I am very grateful to the families for their time and for the frank and open way they detailed their concerns and feelings to me and the impact these have on their lives. They raised a number of important issues with me. Some of these will be answered by the Independent Review I commissioned in January and which I expect to report by Spring next year and by the Public Inquiry I announced on 18 September. But many are pressing now and will be answered and resolved in the coming weeks.

The central thread running through the concerns about the current situation, is that families want detailed information on current levels of safety in the environment in which paediatric cancer patients are treated, including work undertaken to determine the cause of an outbreak and the rationale for infection prevention and control measures that are taken. Families also want information on the work under way in the haematology/oncology areas of the Children's Hospital, the intended outcome in terms of enhanced safety measures from that work and the timeline for completion.

All of this is information they are entitled to and should receive. Whilst this level of detail must come from the Board, families should not be expected to seek it piecemeal from a range of individuals. Nor would it be right that the responsibility for providing this should sit with the clinical teams. That is why I have appointed Professor Craig White, the Divisional Clinical Lead in the Healthcare Quality and Improvement Directorate at the Scottish Government, to review their concerns and act as their dedicated liaison person and single point of contact for families in respect to these issues. Professor White has worked for the Scottish Government since 2014 and led the Scottish Government's work on organisational duty of candour. He has established his expertise in a broad range of areas spanning the governance, assurance and improvement processes implicated by the concerns raised by families.

The families raised a number of specific questions and requirements and Professor White will, work with them and the Board to seek to have these addressed, at pace. In addition, I have asked Health Protection Scotland to undertake an external review of the Board's data on healthcare associated bloodstream infections.

In the coming weeks the Chair and Chief Executive of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde will meet with those families who wish to do so and I expect to see a number

of the immediate practical issues addressed and a clear and full information flow to families established. I also expect to see additional steps taken to support all the staff involved who continue to deliver high quality compassionate care in difficult circumstances.

In all of these discussions the families I met were very clear that all the frontline staff they dealt with, in whatever role, were compassionate, caring and skilled. They were clear that they wanted their gratitude recorded together with their thanks. I hope to meet with staff in the near future but want to use this opportunity to record my personal thanks to them. I will continue to take a close interest in the progress made against the issues and concerns families raised.