



**TRUST BOARD  
SUBMISSION TEMPLATE**

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>Trust Board - Confidential</b>	<b>Ref No. 65.4</b>
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	<b>Responsible for Neurology</b>	<b>Date 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021</b>
<b>Neurology - Update</b>		
<b>Purpose</b>	This paper provides an update on Neurology Review	
<b>Corporate Objective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety &amp; Quality</li> </ul>	
<b>Key areas for consideration</b>	.	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Information</li> </ul>	

**Briefing to Trust Board**  
**Neurology**  
**1<sup>st</sup> April 2021**

**Case Note Review of patients who had Blood Patch Procedure**

Case Note Review of patients (66) who have had a blood patch procedure under the care of Dr Watt, who did not have a clinical review as part of the recall process.

This review was a 2-step process:

1. An internal patient case note review, to establish if all the blood patches, performed on patients under the care of Dr Watt, where clinically indicated. This review is complete involving 66 patients' case notes. Letters to the patients are being finalised to inform them of the outcome.
2. External validation of this review is ongoing. The Royal College of Physicians are undertaking an external review of a third of the patients case note reviews (22 out of the 66 Case notes reviewed) Patients, whose case notes have been reviewed by the RCP will be written to them with the outcome, once it is known.

RCP have advised they are working towards early to mid-April 2021 for completion of this review.

**Public Statutory Inquiry**

The Minister of Health Public announced on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the conversion of the Independent Neurology Inquiry from a non-statutory public inquiry to a statutory public inquiry in Neurology.

Trust staff are continuing to engage fully with this inquiry.

**Outcome 2 Report**

The Department of Health (DOH) are making, arrangements to publish the Neurology Recall Cohort 2 Activity and Outcomes Report

**Clinical Negligence Claims**

As of 4 March 2021, there are 274 negligence claims have been made against the Trust and the Directorate of Legal Services (DLS) are acting on the Trusts direction as the client, in addressing them. The Trust is very conscious of the trauma that many of the recalled patients have suffered and has instructed the lawyers acting for them to act in a manner that does not aggravate this trauma, where possible.

## Communication from the Neurology Recall Patients Support Group

Communication, has been received, from the Neurology Recall Patients Support Group and specific questions have been asked, detailed below with the Trusts response

### Question 1.

**This Neurology Recall Patient Support Group requests the Trust to formally agree with the Minister and the CMO and officially recognise that harm was done to patients and admit this to the Recall Patients.**

Belfast Trust has apologised to all neurology patients and their families who were recalled, and today, we wish to repeat that apology. We sincerely regret all the hurt and pain that has been caused to former patients of Dr Watt. We recognise that patients have been harmed and for that, we are truly sorry.

We recognised that the recalls were going to cause patients great anxiety and in other cases distress, and as such we put psychological support services in place to support patients, families, and carers.

### Question 2.

**This Neurology Recall Patient Support Group requests the Trust to set in motion a recognised plan to support Neurology Recall patients emotionally, psychologically and physically after a wait of almost three years since the Recall.**

Psychology Services have provided and continue to provide psychological support to patients who have been referred to the service.

Additional staff were recruited to assist with the provision of psychological support to patients who were recalled. The Neurology Advice Line has remained open and accessible since 2018 to any patient in need to support.

We note the Group believe these services are inadequate and we are happy to engage with the Group to hear their specific concerns and seek to learn from patient's experiences.

### Question 3.

**This Neurology Recall Patient Support Group requests the Trust to meet with representatives of this Group to ensure that methods of communication are established and adhered to, so that patients are not left in a position of depending on the local press for key information affecting their neurological and general well-being.**

We understand the great anxiety this process has caused many people. At every turn we have tried to ensure that those impacted have heard from the Trust directly. Every patient recalled has been told privately and in real-time if any aspect of their care, treatment or diagnosis has changed.

The Trust looks forward to engaging with the Group and patients generally to be informed by their experiences and try to meet their information needs.

The Chief Executive has agreed to meet with representatives of the Neurology Recall Patient Support Group, facilitated by a local MLA. It is important to note the circumstances which led to the neurology recall are currently being investigated by the public Neurology Inquiry and the Trust is limited in any response.

Every patient recalled has been told privately and in real-time if any aspect of their care, treatment or diagnosis has changed. Separately, Belfast Trust is committed to keeping patients informed when information is requested. It would be a huge challenge to continually write to patients updating them with any general changes and it should be recognised that some patients do not want any additional information. For this reason the Trust responds directly to patients when they request information.

It should be recognised that Belfast Trust works in a wider system and we take direction from the DoH on a number of matters. On these system-wide issues it is appropriate that the Minister or the DoH lead and not the Trust.

As an employer, we are bound by employment law and the legislation around confidentiality.

#### Question 4.

**This Neurology Recall Patient Support Group requests the Trust to ensure that, in keeping with the commitments of the Minister and the CMO, Recall Patients are not further traumatised by a protracted legal process and that outstanding legal issues be expedited without further delay.**

The Belfast Trust is not leading on the redress scheme and we have shared your paper with the department who would be best placed to answer this.

However, the Belfast Trust continues to expedite requests to patients and their legal representatives who have requested a copy of individual medical records.

#### Question 5

**This Neurology Recall Patient Support Group requests that the Trust undertakes to fulfil its duty of candour, openness and honesty as outlined in the Trust Values which state *“we are open and honest with each other and act with integrity and sincerity”*. This has been demonstrably lacking in the case of Neurology Recall Patients and has been a source of frustration and further trauma to many Recall Patients.**

Belfast Trust has endeavoured to be as open and honest in relation to requests for information which relates to their individual care and treatment.

We have written to every patient recalled and apologised for any distress and anxiety that the recalled caused.

As an employer we are bound by employment law and the legislation around confidentiality. We are, therefore, unable to respond to questions regarding individual members of staff.

Trust is keen to engage with the Group to hear their lived experiences, learn from them and in so far as it is able share information and act in a supportive and compassionate manner.

#### Question 6

**This Neurology Recall Patient Support Group requests the Trust to show demonstrable evidence of *“safe, high quality, compassionate care and support”* as per the Trust Values. There has been a**

**severe lack of “safe, high quality, compassionate care and support “in the case of Neurology Recall Patients. The Trust has shown anything but compassionate care and support.**

The Belfast Trust recognises that the care for many patients fell below an acceptable standard and recalled over 3500 patients to ensure that they had the correct diagnosis and were on the correct treatment. We did this as quickly as we could and without delaying other neurology patients who required our care. We absolutely accept that this resulted in additional worry and distress for many patients and their families. Psychology services were made available for patients who needed help.

Feedback from patients attending their review appointment was positive and constructive with overall satisfaction, rated at 86%

There is an ongoing public Neurology Inquiry and Trust staff have fully engaged with the Inquiry.

RQIA has reviewed neurology outpatient services within the Belfast Trust and work is ongoing to strengthen the governance arrangements in our outpatient services.

We are also working to increase the psychology service available to neurology patients who need this clinical expertise. Additionally, we have introduced real time patient feedback on our inpatient adult wards. We hope to roll this out to outpatients in the next year.

There is also a neurology advice line for any recall patient looking for advice, help or support. This advice line has been available since 2018.

The Neurology Advice Line telephone number is 0800 980 1100 and operates Mon to Fri 0900 – 1600, excluding weekends and public holidays.

The Neurology Care Advisory Service is also available Mon to Fri on 028 9504 2270 or via email [neurocareadvice@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:neurocareadvice@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

Other specialist neurology advice lines are in place to support patients with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Motor Neurone disease (MND) Epilepsy.

As, acknowledged earlier, the Trust is keen to engage with the Group to hear their lived experiences, learn from them and in so far as it is able share information and act in a supportive and compassionate manner.

Bernie Owens

Director

31 March 21