

Witness Name: Aidan Dawson
Supplementary Statement No.: 1
Exhibits:0
Dated: 28 November 2024

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

SUPPLEMENTARY WITNESS STATEMENT OF AIDAN DAWSON

I, Aidan Dawson of the Public Health Agency for Northern Ireland, will say as follows in relation to the matters that arose for clarification as a result of my formal evidence session of the 5th November 2024.

Long Covid

1. In keeping with the PHA's role in providing professional advice; PHA staff contributed to the work of a regional group in respect of Long Covid. The regional group was chaired by the then Health and Social Care Board and was established to develop a costed proposal for the assessment and treatment of patients experiencing the longer-term effects of Covid-19.
2. The PHA was not directly involved in work relating to the health and well-being of health and social care staff with Long Covid. Health and social care staff with Long Covid would have been provided with access to multidisciplinary rehabilitation services through their host organisation's Occupational Health Service. Staff members would also have been able to access the suite of Long Covid services that were commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board for the wider population.

IPC Guidance for Clinically Vulnerable or Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Patients

3. The PHA was not approached to be involved in discussions or decisions in relation to the issuing of guidance in respect of clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable patients. It is my understanding that issues pertaining to clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable patients were managed by the Department of Health, Northern Ireland.

Mortality Data for Individuals with a Disability

4. The PHA did not keep, or have any access to, Covid-19 mortality data that could identify individuals with a disability.

Testing

5. At the outset of the pandemic, there was limited Covid-19 testing capacity available in hospital laboratories in Northern Ireland which necessitated the prioritisation of testing.
6. Consideration was given to testing outside of hospital settings and in the first Northern Ireland testing guidance, issued 19 March 2020, testing was included in respect of clusters of disease in residential or care settings. The first reference in relation to Covid-19 testing prior to discharge was in version three of the Northern Ireland testing guidance, 19 April 2020, where testing in advance of discharge to care homes was recommended. In version four of the testing guidance, 4 May 2020, new testing arrangements for managing outbreaks were introduced as well as the requirement to test all new admissions to care homes from community settings.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed:

Personal Data

Dated: 28 November 2024