

The Penrose Inquiry

Request for Information from the SNBTS on the Documentation Account

Provided by Neil Billing

In an email dated 16th December 2011 Douglas Tullis stated:-

What is required is a witness statement confirming:

1. Who prepared the documentation account;
2. How it was assembled in terms of methodology;
3. What files or other source material was it based on;
4. The location of such files or other material;
5. Any systems in place for filing, storage or destruction of such files and material; and
6. The significance of the listed Registry files and any methodology particular to the listing of them.

Response

Who prepared the documentation account?

The Documentation Account was prepared by the SNBTS Public Inquiry Team (PIT), which is staffed by current and former employees, many of whom were in post during the period of interest to the Inquiry. Specifically, it was mainly prepared by Dr Carol Bienek, an SNBTS virologist, who worked temporarily with the PIT for a year from autumn 2008. Dr Bienek worked in co-operation with many SNBTS staff in Regional Transfusion Centres and Directorates. Additionally, Mr Derek Radin, SNBTS Information Governance Manager and Mr Neil Billing, PIT Co-ordinator contributed to the Account.

How it was assembled in terms of methodology?

On 5th March 2009 Professor Ian Franklin, SNBTS National Medical Director with responsibility for the PIT, wrote to the Team outlining the requirements of the Inquiry in respect of documentation¹. Professor Franklin then wrote, on 16th March 2009, to all SNBTS Directors explaining the Inquiry's requirements regarding documentation and enclosing a template spreadsheet to allow all responses to be made on as consistent a basis as possible².

Following the issue of these letters a considerable amount of information was ingathered, both from Ellen's Glen Road, Edinburgh, and also from the Regional Transfusion Centres and Directorates, allowing the submission on the 6th May 2009 of the interim Documentation Account to the Inquiry.

It was clear from the varying levels of detail received initially that the instructions to include "all" records", had not been followed uniformly. A further letter was

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therefore sent to all Regional Transfusion Centre Directors outlining the issue and noting that members of the PIT would be visiting the Centres to discuss the documentation returns with relevant staff and also to carry out an overview audit of the documentation held in the Centre³.

During the course of these visits and the physical audits of the five Regional Centres and other locations more files were identified, especially in "satellite" sections of the Centres. Thereafter there was further communication between the PIT and Regional Centres and Directorates until the SNBTS was satisfied that a comprehensive list of all documentation had been created. An example of this correspondence is a letter to Dr J Gillon⁴.

In December 2009 the PIT submitted the revised final Documentation Account to the Inquiry.

What files or other source material was it based on?

The Documentation Account covers all types of files held by the SNBTS including paper, electronic, scanned, videos and microfiche.

The location of such files or other material?

The locations of the files and other materials are as follows:-

SNBTS HQ and PFC Building – Ellen's Glen Road Edinburgh
 5 Regional Centres Lauriston Building Edinburgh plus -
 Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh
 Gartnaval Hospital, Glasgow
 Ninewells Hospital, Dundee
 Raigmore Hospital, Inverness
 Royal Infirmary, Aberdeen
 Iron Mountain (Storage), Aberdeen and Livingston
 Advantage (Storage), Inverness
 CSA/NSS HQ, Gyle Square, Edinburgh
 ATOS, Eilburn, Livingston
 SNBTS, Bush Estate, Penicuik
 University of Edinburgh, Summerhall, Edinburgh
 SNBTS Transport, Possil, Glasgow

Any systems in place for filing, storage or destruction of such files and material?

The NHS in Scotland has had Records Management policies in place since 1958. In October 2010 a letter was sent to the CSA/NSS Head of Corporate Affairs⁵ asking for confirmation that the CSA/NSS had implemented all of the NHS policies outlined in the Scottish Government Circular CEL 28(2008)⁶. A response was received by email which noted the CSA/NSS position and enclosed a chronological schedule of the NSS Storage, Retention and Disposal Policy⁷. Also attached were versions 1 to 5 of the CSA/NSS policy documents. The SNBTS section of the policy (version 5) is attached for reference⁸.

The significance of the listed Registry files and any methodology particular to the listing of them?

In 2005 the then SNBTS Corporate Issues Director decided that, in order to comply with Information Governance policy and with the advent of the Freedom of Information Act, a central Registry should be set up.

Agreement was reached on accommodation, staffing and the records to be kept, which included:-

- SNBTS Management Board minutes
- Medical & Scientific Committee minutes
- Minutes of other meetings that develop or decide SNBTS policy
- Supporting papers for all of the above
- Correspondence generated by the above

It was planned that, as the Registry developed and Record Management Policy was rolled out, there should be a reduction in the level of paper records in favour of an electronic archive which had already been created for donor session records and certain clinical records. The Registry was the responsibility of the Corporate Issues Director, supported by an archivist, the SNBTS Records Management Officer and subject matter experts drawn from the SNBTS professions.

A system known as "Index R" was introduced to summarise and categorise the contents of the Registry. It also provided the reference used for scanned documents to allow access to these documents on-line. The Registry files listed for the Inquiry were firstly split over "on Index R" and "not on Index R" and were thereafter listed according to their physical location within SNBTS, Ellen's Glen Road.

The action taken in 2005 to create the Registry considerably assisted the PIT with the recovery of documents requested by the Inquiry.

Neil Billing

7th February 2012