

Strictly embargoed until (9am) on (Tuesday 22 December 2009)

Vale of Leven Hospital Inquiry announces preliminary hearing date and venue

The date for the preliminary hearing as part of the public Inquiry into the occurrence of Clostridium difficile (C diff) infection at the Vale of Leven Hospital in Dumbarton last year has been announced.

Inquiry chairman, Lord MacLean, will lead the preliminary hearing at Dumbarton Sheriff Court on Monday, February 1 from 11am, which will confirm those parties that have already been granted Core Participant status and outline the anticipated timescale and structure for proceedings.

During the period between December 1, 2007 and June 1, 2008, 55 patients at the Vale of Leven Hospital contracted C diff and 18 people died.

In April this year, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Nicola Sturgeon, announced that a public Inquiry would be held to examine the cause of the outbreak and the Inquiry officially began its work on October 1.

While focusing on the Vale of Leven Hospital, Lord MacLean will be able to refer to other experience of C diff infection within and beyond Scotland to help inform recommendations in light of the lessons identified from the circumstances surrounding the outbreak.

The Inquiry, in accordance with the Inquiries Act 2005, is inquisitorial in nature and not adversarial, nor does it have any power to determine civil or criminal liability.

The preliminary hearing will be open to all Core Participants and their legal representatives as well as any person wishing to be designated as a Core Participant, patients, their families and members of the public.

Lord MacLean will invite legal representatives of those already designated Core Participants – or the Core Participants themselves where not legally represented – to make brief opening submissions, which should set out their position on areas of interest to the Inquiry within its terms of reference.

The Chairman will also invite anyone else wishing to be designated a Core Participant to submit a written application to the Inquiry, which will be considered in the days following the preliminary hearing.

It is expected that the preliminary hearing will last for approximately two hours. Information regarding the procedures for the Inquiry is available on the Inquiry website at www.valeoflevenhospitalinquiry.org and details on the venue for the Inquiry will be made available shortly.

Issued on behalf of the Vale of Leven Hospital Inquiry by The BIG Partnership. For more information contact:

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