

Wednesday, January 20, 2010

## **Vale of Leven Hospital Inquiry confirms venue and extended timescale**

The latest details of the public Inquiry into the 2007/8 *Clostridium difficile* (C diff) infection at the Vale of Leven Hospital in Dumbarton have been announced.

The oral hearings will take place at the Community Central Hall in Maryhill, Glasgow. The hearings will be held in blocks lasting a number of weeks with the first block expected to start in June.

The Inquiry will consider how 55 patients contracted C diff and the deaths associated with the outbreak at the Dunbartonshire hospital. In addition, the Inquiry will also consider the handling of the outbreak of C diff infection at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee last year.

The Inquiry will look at any changes in practice or policy regarding the prevention and control of the healthcare acquired infection since the Vale of Leven occurrence and ensure that any of these changes are taken into account in the recommendations that are made in the report to Scottish Ministers.

It has also become clear that the context for the events at the hospital, including the rearrangement of health boards in 2006, subsequent restructuring within NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, and earlier assessments of the hospital as well as the health board's reaction to these, should also be considered.

The Chairman of the Inquiry, Lord MacLean, has agreed with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Nicola Sturgeon that the Inquiry will now report by the end of May 2011 to allow all this work to take place.

Julie-Anne Jamieson, Secretary to the Inquiry said: "We are pleased to be able to confirm where and when the oral hearings will start.

"We can also confirm that paragraph (f) of the terms of reference allows the Inquiry to examine the handling of the C diff occurrence at Ninewells Hospital and specifically any changes in practice or policy regarding the prevention and control of healthcare acquired infection since the Vale of Leven incident.

"After carefully considering all the facts to hand, as gathered thus far, Lord MacLean and the Inquiry team have concluded that this new timescale should allow us to gather all the necessary evidence, involve all relevant witnesses and ensure that the result is an in-depth examination of our terms of reference."

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Nicola Sturgeon, announced in April last year that a public Inquiry into the incident at the Vale of Leven Hospital, which occurred between December 1, 2007 and June 1, 2008, would take place. The Inquiry officially began its work on October 1, 2009.

The Inquiry team has already undertaken considerable background research on the circumstances of the Vale of Leven Hospital outbreak. It has also begun taking statements from witnesses and will hold a preliminary hearing with all interested parties on Monday, February 1, within Dumbarton Sheriff Court.

The Inquiry, in accordance with the Inquiries Act 2005, does not have any power to determine civil or criminal liability – it is inquisitorial in nature and not adversarial.

Information regarding the procedures and the venue for the Inquiry is available on the Inquiry website at [www.valeoflevehospitalinquiry.org](http://www.valeoflevehospitalinquiry.org).

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

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**Notes to news editors:**

Lord MacLean and the Inquiry team considered a number of possible venues in the Dumbarton area and in Glasgow. The possible venues in Dumbarton were unsuitable because of their small size. They also required substantial upgrading and work to provide the necessary IT infrastructure.

Maryhill Community Central Halls has a large hearing chamber and office space. It is vital that there is space for everyone who wants to attend.

Maryhill has good local facilities, a café and disabled access. It has good transport links – including bus, train and underground services – nearby for witnesses and participants coming from across Scotland.

Most significantly, it will be ready for use as an Inquiry hearing venue by the time oral hearings start later in 2010.