

Thirlwall Inquiry

THE THIRLWALL INQUIRY

RULE 9 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NURSES

Name: Vicky Lisa Blamire

Role as per Countess of Chester 2005 until present Staff List: Nursery Nurse

Enclosed documents: Audio recorded witness interview dated 26 January 2018 (INQ0007697)

Witness statement dated 26 January 2018 (INQ0001403)

Audio recorded witness interview dated 1 April 2020 (INQ0007696)

Witness statement dated 14 April 2020 (INQ0000346)

Extract from transcript of Day 43 of trial (2 December 2022) relating to your evidence (INQ0010288)

Questionnaire

Nursing career and employment at the Countess of Chester Hospital (the "hospital")

1. Please provide a short summary of your nursing career. This summary should include at least the following information:
 - a. when you qualified as a nurse, including the educational institute or awarding body;
 - b. your nursing qualifications, including your nursing band from 2015 to the present;
 - c. details of your previous and current employment.

I have been a qualified nursery nurse for over 25 years. I became a band 4 in 2005 which I am still currently. From leaving school, I went on to carry out my Nursery Nurse Diploma (NNEB) and worked in a Pre School nursery. I&S When I returned to work I&S I worked within the Countess of Chester Hospital, working as a Appointments Officer which enabled me to work in the evenings. I&S During this time, a position was advertised to train as a Neo-Natal Assistant. I met the requirements necessary for this role so applied for the position. I have been doing this job for over 18 years and I still work at the Hospital now.

2. What were your duties and responsibilities (including any management responsibilities) as a nurse on the neonatal unit (the "NNU") at the hospital in 2015 and 2016?

As a Band 4 Neon-Natal Assistant, I report to a Shift Leader. My responsibilities were completing clinical tasks, such as administering simple oral medication, carrying out feeds, carrying out observations, caring for babies who required phototherapy, participated in educating parents, and working collaboratively to ensure neonatal needs are met, whilst participating in any clerical and housekeeping duties as required.

The culture and atmosphere on the NNU at the hospital in 2015-2016

3. How would you describe the quality of the management, supervision and/or support of nurses on the NNU between June 2015 and June 2016?

As a unit we are a hard- working dedicated team. Between the period of the dates above, I think the unit was extremely busy. Like any NHS hospital it would have been preferable to have more staff. Whilst being on shift I always felt well supported. If I didn't feel like I could approach my manager, I knew there was always someone I could talk with.

4. How would you describe the relationships between: (i) clinicians and managers; (ii) nurses, midwives and managers; and (iii) between medical professionals (doctors, nurses, midwives and others) at the hospital between June 2015 and June 2016?

I feel as a team we communicated well. Relationships were good. I had no concerns. We all worked in a professional manner and gave the best care we could. Sometimes I felt the relationship between neo-natal staff and the midwives could have been better. I can remember on some occasions the unit was full and maternity were aware of our status but still they would deliver babies and some of these babies might have needed our care which took us over our limits.

Concerns or suspicions

5. Were you given any training on how to report concerns about fellow members of staff? When? If so, how were any concerns to be reported?

Working in this environment I would hope I wouldn't have to rise concerns over a work colleague. If I did have any worries, I certainly would rise an alarm, to management or higher.

6. Did you have any concerns or suspicions about the conduct of Lucy Letby ("Letby") while you worked on the NNU? If yes, what were your concerns or suspicions and did you raise them with anyone, either formally or informally?

I didn't spend much time with Lucy, in or out of work. It wasn't until finding out about more and more fatalities that questions were asked about which members of staff were present at the time as this would have a big impact on their own mental health. Hearing Lucy's name with every occasion made me feel very uncomfortable as she didn't show any kind of emotion. I remember feeling very shocked and confused as to why she didn't seem to be upset. This was very unnerving.

7. Were you aware of any suspicions or concerns of others about the conduct of Letby and, if so, when and how did you become aware of those concerns?

I was aware that the manager at the time was very supportive of Lucy and even some senior management. This would be from conversations from other work colleagues. I remember being called in for meetings and senior management trying to encourage staff members to be 'Nice' to Lucy. This was after she was removed from the unit. Again this made me feel very uncomfortable.

8. What discussion or debrief was there (formal or otherwise) with or between nurses, or between nurses and doctors, after the death of a baby?

I don't recall much feedback after a death of a baby, but this isn't unusual as working as a band 4 we would only look after the special care babies and those babies who would be getting ready for home. So on reflection the more well babies. As I wasn't involved or present during a death of a baby, I couldn't reflect on this accurately.

9. Were you ever aware or worried about the increase in the number of deaths on the NNU? If so, when was this and what did you think?

I remember feeling shocked and confused about the increasing number of deaths. I would never imagine a work colleague being accused of such dreadful crimes. This wasn't normal to have so many patients becoming unwell or even die which was extremely unsettling. I think other staff felt the same too.

Reflections

10. Do you think if the babies had been monitored by CCTV the crimes of Letby could have been prevented?

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Unfortunately, I feel if someone wanted to hurt someone then I believe they would do it anyway. Having CCTV I don't think would of prevented such a crime.

11. What recommendations do you think this Inquiry should make to keep babies in NNUs safe from any criminal actions of staff?

Babies are safe in the Neo- Natal Care. No one could possibly imagine working alongside someone who would want to harm them. The question of 'Why', will always be in my mind.

Request for documents

12. Do you have any documents or other information which are potentially relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference? For example, any documents relating to concerns that were raised about Letby or the safety of the babies on the NNU in 2015 and 2016. If so, please itemise them and provide copies with your signed statement.

I have no further documentation.

Personal Data

Signed: _____Vblamire_____

Full Name: _____Mrs Vicky Blamire_____

Dated: _____24/03/24_____

24.03.24.