

THIRLWALL INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF Oliver RACKHAM

I, Oliver RACKHAM, will say as follows: -

1. I am a consultant paediatrician, now specialising in neonatal medicine.

Medical career, employment and roles

2. My qualifications as a doctor are BA(Hons), Cambridge (1991), MB BS, London (1994), MRCPCH (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health) (1999).

I worked as a consultant in Arrowe Park Hospital (Wirral University Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) from May 2005 until December 2018. Since then I have worked in Glan Clwyd Hospital (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board).

In 2015 – 2016 I was a consultant on the neonatal intensive care unit in Arrowe Park Hospital. As part of that role, I worked as a consultant for the neonatal transport team serving Cheshire and Merseyside.

I was clinical service lead for the neonatal unit from 2011 until 2016.

3. Arrowe Park Hospital neonatal unit is an “intensive care unit” providing care for babies of all levels of prematurity. It does not provide cardiac or surgical care, which is provided by Liverpool Women’s and Alder Hey Children’s Hospitals, in Liverpool.

In 2015 – 2016, the Countess of Chester Hospital was a “local neonatal unit”. As such, they would provide care for babies from 27 weeks gestation and above, and only limited intensive care. More preterm or sicker babies would be stabilised and then transferred out to a NICU (usually either Arrowe Park or Liverpool Women’s Hospitals).

4. The neonatal transport team was responsible for transferring babies between neonatal units across Cheshire and Merseyside. This would be either as an “uplift” in care to provide intensive care, for “repatriation” back to the hospital of booking, or closest to the family’s home, or for specialist care (eg cardiac or surgical, as above).

Referrals would be made by the team in the hospital caring for the baby. They would call the transport team to arrange for the transfer logistics: timing, personnel required, etc.

They would also call the hospital to which the baby was to be transferred, to provide a clinical handover to the team who would carry out ongoing care of the baby.