



## **OPENING STATEMENT FROM LORD WEIR, CHAIR OF THE ELJAMEL INQUIRY**

**3<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2025**

Welcome.

I am Lord Weir, Chair of the Eljamel Public Inquiry.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has now announced the setting up of the Inquiry, which means it has now formally started.

In this video, I want to explain briefly why the Inquiry has been established, what it intends to investigate, how it will be conducted, and how you can be kept informed about what it is doing.

Between 1995 and 2014, Mr. Sam Eljamel was employed by NHS Tayside as a senior neurosurgeon. He withdrew his name from the Medical Register of the General Medical Council in 2015. The Inquiry is charged with looking at the entirety of that 20 year period.

For part of that time, Mr. Eljamel conducted private neurosurgical work at Fernbrae Hospital in Dundee. We understand that he also held various research and teaching roles with the University of Dundee.

Concerns about the standard of clinical care provided by Mr. Eljamel to his patients gave rise over time, to a number of reviews and investigations.

Dissatisfaction about the quality and rigour of those processes, and a determined campaign by affected patients, public figures and others, led to the announcement, by the then Cabinet Secretary, of a public inquiry on the 7th of September 2023.

On the 29th of February 2024, I was appointed to Chair the Inquiry.

As those who attended our public consultation events in October 2024 will know, I now have the benefit of a committed and experienced team to provide me with legal advice and otherwise support me in my role.

With the setting up of the Inquiry, I and they are now empowered to commence our investigations. The Inquiry's purpose is defined by the terms of reference set by the Cabinet Secretary.

They are of course the product of a consultation exercise, which was held by the Inquiry team in late 2024 with interested parties, including former patients of Mr.

Eljamel and their relatives, and representatives of NHS Tayside, and my report to the Cabinet's Secretary on the views expressed in that process.

The full terms of reference are available on the Inquiry's website. They are wide and represent for the Inquiry a very significant body of work.

Amongst the matters which they require the Inquiry to investigate are Mr. Eljamel's appointment to key roles as a senior neurosurgeon with NHS Tayside and in the University of Dundee, as well as the circumstances and processes which led to Mr. Eljamel's clinical supervision and suspension in 2013, his resignation in May, 2014 and NHS Tayside's role in the erasure of his name from the GMC's medical register in 2015, aspects of his clinical practice in the NHS, including the impact of Mr. Eljamel's medical research appointments, his private work and workload on the care received by his patients.

We will also look at his supervision of other surgeons working under him, the operation and adequacy of clinical governance, risk management and complaints practises and procedures within NHS Tayside, so far as relevant to Mr. Eljamel's professional activities, as well as the outcomes of those processes, the involvement of other relevant bodies which played a role in the professional activities of Mr. Eljamel, or could have done and previous reviews of, or investigations into the professional activities of Mr. Eljamel and whether there was any failure or delay in disclosing to those who needed to know evidence of substandard practice.

In drawing conclusions about these matters, my Inquiry will rely on the findings of Professor Wigmore's independent clinical review about what happened and what went wrong clinically in individual cases.

I recognise that for many former patients and their families, the experiences which form the subject matter of the Inquiry have been traumatic. That is why my Inquiry is committed to conducting its work in a way that is trauma informed.

It will listen to those who feel that their voices have not been heard. It will pursue its investigations with an open mind, showing courtesy and respect towards those with whom it comes into contact, but guided by the principle of impartiality that comes from it being independent of any individual or body, including the Scottish Government that funds it.

We are now ready to start ingathering and scrutinising the documentary evidence.

When that has happened, we will hold public hearings. First, at a preliminary hearing, which will set out the progress and intentions of the Inquiry and provide an opportunity for core participants and their representatives to contribute, then at a hearing at which we will provide the opportunity for opening statements to be made, and then at hearings at which witnesses will be called to give evidence.

In order to promote visibility and accessibility, those hearings will be broadcast.

I cannot predict with any certainty how long the Inquiry will take, but I stand by the commitment I made at the public consultation events that we will do all that is

possible to complete the work of the Inquiry as quickly as possible, consistent with the thoroughness necessary to exhaust its terms of reference.

My Inquiry is publicly accountable for its work. Visibility and communication are key components in respecting that accountability.

The Inquiry will endeavour to be clear with those engaged in its work, whoever they may be, and whatever interests they may have about what it is doing and why.

A statement on protocols and principles has already been uploaded to the website, as have other protocols which set out the role of core participants, how to apply to be one, and how funding for legal representation will be dealt with.

These are matters which will be addressed in the coming weeks, to allow those who meet the statutory test to contribute to our work as formal core participants in the process without undue delay.

We will be publishing other protocols appropriate to particular milestones or events in the Inquiry's work in order to keep you up to date as and when appropriate and with sufficient notice to allow those with an interest to know the direction of travel in plenty of time.

As our terms of reference require, we will also publish an agreement, setting out how the Inquiry intends to go about working with the independent clinical review process Chaired by Professor Wigmore.

If you have any questions about the Inquiry, or if you have information that you wish to provide to it, you can contact the Inquiry team via the website.

The explanatory notes to the terms of reference provide that the Inquiry will afford an opportunity for public acknowledgement of the suffering of former patients of Mr. Eljamel and a forum for public consideration of evidence of their experiences.

At the consultation events in October, I committed to putting the former patients of Mr. Eljamel at the centre of this process.

Today, I renew that commitment.

Those who become engaged in the work of the Inquiry all have an interest in finding out what happened, what went wrong, and who was responsible.

My aim is to conduct a fair and thorough Inquiry that reaches answers to the questions posed by our terms of reference for those who seek them.