

The BRI Inquiry into Paediatric Cardiac Surgical Services 1984 – 1995

Name	Hugh Robert ROSS
Address	United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust Trust Headquarters Marlborough Street BRISTOL BS1 3NU
Occupation	Chief Executive of UBHT

This statement is my final written submission to the Inquiry into paediatric cardiac surgical services in Bristol 1984–1995; it supplements my earlier statements and oral evidence. I do not attempt to repeat or summarise the evidence I have already given which is, I hope, self-explanatory and for the Inquiry to assess without any further comment from me. There are 4 main points that I wish to make in this statement, which has been fully endorsed by the Chairman and the Trust Board.

Introduction

1. On behalf of the United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust and its predecessor bodies, I should like to say sorry to the children and families of those who used the paediatric cardiac surgical services in Bristol in the past. It is clear to me that a substantial number of parents and children did not receive the standard of care that they were entitled to expect.
2. This has been a very difficult issue for the Trust to deal with. Since I took up my post my first priority has been to ensure that the Trust's services were safe and effective whilst facing up honestly to the legacy of the past. I am very grateful that many parents have been willing to discuss with myself and others their experiences of past paediatric cardiac surgical services in Bristol. This has helped us to steadily improve our services for the benefit of all patients. I have seen at first hand how painful and distressing it has been for many parents to remember and reflect again

on the events of the past. I would like to pay tribute to their bravery and composure under the most extreme of circumstances, particularly those parents with whom we have worked most closely.

The Inquiry

3. I would like to turn now to the Public Inquiry. The Trust has welcomed this Inquiry into the paediatric cardiac surgical services in Bristol between 1984-1995. We know that the issues were very complex and wide ranging, as well as covering a lengthy period of time during which there were many changes both in clinical care and in the way that NHS services were delivered. The period covered by the Inquiry also saw substantial changes in public expectations of our National Health Service.
4. The Trust has worked very hard to support the Inquiry as well as it possibly can: by providing access to very many documents; by encouraging staff to come forward with their knowledge, views and opinions; and by assisting members of staff in the preparation of witness statements or oral evidence for the Inquiry.
5. Throughout this process, the Trust has been grateful for the courtesy and co-operation of the Inquiry's staff, both the legal team and the secretariat. I would like to thank them for that courtesy and for their understanding of our needs in continuing to run a large and complex NHS Trust.
6. I would also like to pay tribute and offer my personal thanks to members of staff in the Trust for maintaining services so well whilst giving so much time to the important task of supporting and informing this enquiry.

Applying the Lessons

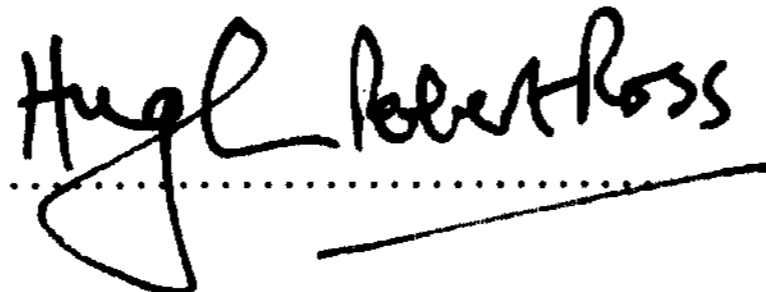
7. As the Inquiry has proceeded, it has become clear that many of the issues which have arisen have not related just to UBHT or its predecessor bodies but are of national relevance and national importance. The Trust has nevertheless continued to

revise and improve its processes and procedures at every opportunity. We look forward to the Inquiry's final report and the opportunity to learn any further lessons that need to be learned, whether those be specific to Bristol or applicable to the NHS as a whole.

The future

8. I am proud to say that the United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust is now recognised to be taking a lead regionally and nationally in clinical governance, with high standards of clinical audit, and great openness in our dealings with patients and the public about all aspects of our work. We have pioneered the publication of our cardiac surgery results on the Internet, for all to see. This represents our policy for the future.
9. In particular, the Trust is proud of the new status and reputation of its paediatric surgery services. The outstanding work undertaken by Mr Ash Pawade and his team at the Children's Hospital since 1995 has now been enhanced by the appointment of a second paediatric cardiac surgeon, Mr. Andrew Parry. The unit's results are now amongst the very best in the U.K. and we fully intend to ensure that remains the case.
10. Finally I would like to echo the sentiments so often expressed to me by the parents whom I have worked and talked with in recent years. It is essential that out of past events in Bristol come changes and improvements that benefit children throughout the National Health Service. I am sure that the Inquiry will fulfil that heavy responsibility, and I know that the National Health Service will respond positively to all that is subsequently asked of it.

Signed



Hugh Robert ROSS

Dated

28th January 2000.