

Independent Neurology Inquiry

Implementation Update Bulletin
July 2026



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Fourth Edition of the INI Update Bulletin.

In this edition, our 'Quarterly Spotlight Feature' focuses on progress in delivering Recommendation 19: Review Clinical Directors and Clinical Leads Roles, highlighting key developments and ongoing work.

We also provide an update on progress toward the full implementation of all 76 INI Recommendations, including information on the publication of a progress report.

Additionally, this bulletin includes a summary of the meeting between Senior Leadership from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) and families involved in the Deceased Patient Review (DPR) Phase 2, reflecting continued engagement and dialogue.

The bulletin concludes with information regarding the BHSCT Neurology Compensation deadline, ensuring stakeholders are informed of current timelines and next steps.

QUARTERLY SPOTLIGHT FEATURE

Recommendation 19 – Review Clinical Directors and Clinical Leads Role

The Independent Neurology Inquiry (INI) reported in June 2022 with 76 recommendations, including a review of Clinical Director roles (Recommendation 19).

The NI Department of Health should initiate a detailed review in relation to the role of clinical directors and clinical leads to address issues arising from this report and their training needs.

INI Recommendation 19 was accepted and welcomed by Department of Health as a timely opportunity for HSC to assess the landscape of medical leadership in Northern Ireland.

In response, the Department of Health commissioned Dr John Simpson in May 2025 to undertake an independent review.

The Review

The review employed a mixed methodology approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data gathered through focus groups, a quantitative survey and a series of stakeholder meetings. It examined the definition of the Clinical Director role and its associated workforce to understand current experiences, evaluate existing training provision, and identify opportunities to strengthen future leadership development.

The objectives of the review were as follows:

- To describe the Clinical Director (CD) population within HSC
- To describe current roles and responsibilities
- To engage with and explore the experiences of Clinical Directors
- To describe current training and development opportunities and identify any areas for improvement
- To inform future Trust and HSC training programmes

Dr Simpson, working alongside Dr Maeve Middleton, met with key stakeholders including the Inquiry Chairs, Medical Leadership Forum, Trust Medical Leadership groups, Departmental Chief Professional Officers and the General Medical Council (GMC).

The review was supported by the NI Medical Leaders' Forum and dovetails a recent report exploring the experience of Medical Leaders completed by Dr Patrick McAleavey.

The review concluded in January 2026.

QUARTERLY SPOTLIGHT FEATURE

Recommendation 19 – Review Clinical Directors and Clinical Leads Role

Key Findings of the Review

The review identified the following key findings:

- Clinical Directors show a strong willingness to lead but require structured development and organisational support.
- No standard role definition across Trusts.
- High motivation to improve services.
- Positive collaboration with senior leaders.
- Regional consistency in relation to an induction programme and access to training would be welcomed.

Areas for Improvement

Priority actions include:

- Strengthening administrative and business support.
- Developing standardised job descriptions and job plans.
- Expanding joint training with operational colleagues.
- Enhancing induction and leadership development pathways.
- Supporting regional networks and peer collaboration.

Next Steps

The outcomes of this review are being progressed alongside a wider piece of work in relation to Medical Professional Leadership. This will provide a clear and consistent approach to strengthening leadership across the medical workforce. It is intended to:

- Build leadership capability across the medical workforce.
- Encourage both formal and informal leadership roles.
- Support doctors to contribute meaningfully to service improvement.
- Deliver sustainable change and improved outcomes across HSC.

INI RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE



Since our last Update Bulletin in March, the following recommendations have been provided to the Assurance Sub Group (ASG) for their consideration to have the status updated to “implemented”.

- **Rec 20** – The NI Department of Health should ensure that Trust Boards have a Safety and Quality Sub-Committee, which has a similar status to the Audit Committee.
- **Rec 21** – The NI Department of Health should clarify with the Trust Boards the nature of their accountability for patient safety.

The Assurance Sub Group are content that sufficient progress has been made to demonstrate implementation. Accordingly, recommendations 20 and 21 will be presented to the Inquiries Implementation Programme Management Board (IIPMB) for consideration at its next meeting, marking a total of 59 INI recommendations as fully implemented.

Work is continuing to progress the remaining recommendations, with a number expected to be presented to the Assurance Sub Group and IIPMB over the coming months.

Officials are in the final stages of producing an INI Implementation Progress Report. This report will provide a detailed overview of the significant progress that has been made in implementing the recommendations set out in the Inquiry’s final report, including a summary of the position of the current state of implementation for each recommendation. It is envisaged that this Progress Report will be published to the Departmental website over the summer months.

Meeting between Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's Senior Leadership and families of the Deceased Patient Review (Phase 2)

A meeting of Senior Leadership from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) and families of the Deceased Patient Review (DPR) Phase 2, with Minister Nesbitt in attendance in an observer capacity, was held on 11 March 2026 in Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate. In attendance from the BHSCT was Jennifer Welsh, Chief Executive, Professor Stuart Elborn, Chair of the Board, Patricia Gordon, Vice Chair of the Board, and Bronagh Dalzell, Head of Communications.

The meeting provided an opportunity for families to engage directly with BHSCT, sharing their views, concerns, and experiences.

Prof. Elborn opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. He offered his apologies on behalf of the Trust for poor communication and uncertainty, a lack of care, and that acknowledgement has only come after the passing of a loved one.

Prof. Elborn stated that Trust colleagues were not here to defend, minimise or change how anyone feels, but rather, to listen and learn. He acknowledged that families feel a sense of betrayal and stated that trust is not rebuilt by words, but through actions.

During the meeting, families shared their experiences of the level of care provided to their loved ones, and raised concerns relating to a number of areas, including: a failure of governance systems, a lack of risk management, lack of communication, the failure of the Trust to engage with the families of deceased patients and the need for protections for those raising concerns.

Whilst at times emotional, the meeting was constructive, with BHSCT offering to continue engagement with families on an individual basis, should they choose to do so. These meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss loved one's individual cases. Departmental officials have agreed to facilitate ongoing engagement with the Trust.

The meeting was closed by Minister Nesbitt thanking everyone for their attendance. Minister Nesbitt stated that he does not underestimate how difficult this is and confirmed his determination to effect the necessary changes to strengthen patient safety and rebuild trust.

If any DPR Phase 2 families would like to engage with BHSCT on an individual basis, and have not already done so, please email neurologydoh@health-ni.gov.uk. Officials will take this forward to ensure the necessary arrangements are made.

NEUROLOGY RECALL COMPENSATION

Any recalled neurology patients who wish to lodge a claim are strongly encouraged to seek independent legal advice in respect of time limits and the merits of their case. The relevant legislation states that a claim must be lodged within 3 years of the incident or date of knowledge of the incident. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) have accepted an extended period for date of knowledge and in consideration of exceptional circumstances, they have agreed to extend the timeframe for individuals wishing to pursue legal action. Anyone wishing to initiate a claim against the Belfast Trust has until **21 December 2027** to issue proceedings. [Neurology Recall Compensation Update | Belfast Health & Social Care Trust website](#).

This relates solely to treatment provided by BHSCT. Private patients should seek advice from their solicitor if they wish to initiate a claim.

Individuals wishing to contact BHSCT in relation to claims should address their query to the Senior Litigation Officer at Cal-Legalservdept@belfasttrust.hscni.net. This mailbox is monitored daily by Senior Litigation Officers.

Further information and support materials can be found at [Neurology Recall Compensation | Department of Health](#)

The Department has no role in Judicial processes, including those relating to medical negligence claims. These matters operate independently of government, and the Department cannot provide legal advice to patients and families and does not have a role in the administration or outcome of medico-legal proceedings.



NEXT EDITION

The next edition of the INI Implementation Update Bulletin will include:

- An update on recently implemented Recommendations.
- Relevant developments in relation to the Deceased Patient Review.

CONTACT

Further information, including previous bulletins and useful links, is available at:

[Independent Neurology Inquiry \(INI\) | Department of Health](#)

You can contact the INI Implementation Team by email at: **neurologydoh@healthni.gov.uk**