

**Minutes of public meeting of the PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel on Teams
10.00 – 12:00 on 16 November 2023**

Panel Members present: Dr Steve Hajioff – Independent Chair
Dr Tony Fletcher – PFAS and Health member
Professor Ian Cousins – PFAS and Environment member

Joined by Islanders: Mr Graeme Farmer and Mr Joseph Farmer

In attendance: Grace Norman – Deputy Director Public Health
Sarah Tyler – Senior Policy Officer
Anita De La Cour – Executive Assistant

Welcome:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Panel meeting, and reminded people the meeting was being recorded.

The Chair recapped in the meeting that the Panel would be producing a series of five reports:

1. The 1st report is an interim report on the feasibility of therapeutic phlebotomy as a way of supporting people who have elevated PFAS levels in their serum and assessing whether phlebotomy helps them. The report is now finalised.
2. The 2nd report is more detailed, on the health impacts of PFAS exposure and particular groups of the population that might be at increased risk or reduced risk. Today's discussions will inform this report.
3. The 3rd report is more detailed and will look at all potential treatments for people who have been exposed to PFAS, and the evidence on how effective those treatments are as well as looking at testing.
4. The 4th report focuses on PFAS in the environment, how to reduce exposure, environmental interventions, and how to help manage PFAS in environment.
5. The 5th report is an update to first 4 reports, and any further information and evidence as the science is fast moving.

The Panel can be emailed via PFASpanel@gov.ie.

Introductions:

The Chair and Panel members introduced themselves.

Dr Steve Hajioff, Independent Panel Chair: A background as a GP and a retired Director of Public Health from an area of London with two major international airports and a variety of other environmental challenges.

Dr Tony Fletcher, PFAS and Health Panel Member: Epidemiologist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, working on PFAS since 2006 and member of the panel with experience of studies on the health effects of PFAS in West Virginia in the United States, in the Veneto region, in Italy, and in Ronneby.

Tony Fletcher commented that he was aware of a cancer research study, due to be published in the next 2 weeks, which may be of interest to this report.

Professor Ian Cousins, PFAS and Environment Panel Member: A Professor at Stockholm University, an expert on PFAS, appointed as the environmental expert on this Panel and whose expertise on PFAS is on the sources, transport, fate, and exposure of PFAS.

Grace Norman, Deputy Director of Public Health for the Government of Jersey, the commissioner of this work, and a standing observer at these meetings.

Support staff for programme management and administration were also in attendance.

Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations.

Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. No matters arising.

Additional findings since the last meeting

Exploring the Bradford Hill viewpoints is on the agenda, however, the Chair decided to move this item to another meeting as the main function of this meeting is to hear from experts by experience.

Update on report 1: The potential for an interim therapeutic phlebotomy service

The final version of report 1 has been sent to Ministers and a public meeting will be held on 1 December where Ministers will give their response to the report.

Introducing the experts by experience and the purpose of the meeting

Steve Hajioff explained that there were subject matter experts on PFAS, and global experts will be invited to give evidence at future meetings. There are also experts by experience, who are people from the Island who have experiences that they want to share, and this can inform areas that the Panel may explore. In the report, the Panel can also reflect on what this looks like in the real world and reflect on the case studies they have heard. This information may also help inform how doctors support people in the future.

The plan was to hear from 3 people this morning, but unfortunately one person could not attend, and they will be invited to the next meeting. Later today the Panel will also meet with 2 other affected Islanders who wish to give their testimonies in private.

A reminder was given to stay on topic and that this discussion is specifically for report 2, assessment of the impact of PFAS exposure on health. In addition, the Panel cannot give individual health advice. The Panel hope to support a resource for clinicians in the future to support discussions with people regarding PFAS.

Experts by experience personal stories

Mr Graeme Farmer and Mr Joseph Farmer gave testimonies which described the places they had lived, on island and off island, the years they had drank water from a private supply, and their respective medical histories.

The Panel then asked some clarification questions regarding the testimonies.

The Panel agreed to ensure that a range of health conditions will be reviewed.

The Chair thanked Graeme and Joe for their testimonies and acknowledged the difficulties they had faced.

Broader discussion

The meeting then went on to have a broader discussion of the implications on their lives, and what else the Panel might need to investigate, in terms of the report.

Steve Hajioff mentioned that raised cholesterol can be difficult to pinpoint the cause for, as cholesterol can run in families, however the Panel are aware of an association between PFAS and cholesterol and will look into it.

Steve Hajioff enquired regarding whether Islanders had conversations with clinicians about PFAS, and how have they engaged with you?

Graeme Farmer commented that clinicians were not helpful when we got the blood results and did not know how to interpret it.

Joe Farmer commented that his doctors did not want to comment on PFAS.

Steve Hajioff commented that this is interesting to note. This tells us there is a learning need.

Grace Norman commented that Public Health engaged with GPs ahead of the blood testing, and sent information and GPs had separate briefing. This was to enable them to have information to support giving people their results. Grace apologised that people had a negative experience with their results and said that the patient leaflet will be added to the PFAS web page.

Ian Cousins said that PFAS results can be very difficult for doctors to interpret, and the Panel will consider how the information can be communicated in the future.

Tony Fletcher commented on exposure and said we do not know how much ongoing exposure may be nor the background levels in the general population. The average half-life is 5 years but there is a big variation between different types of PFAS and between individuals, for example it can range from two or ten years. Depending on your individual half-life, you may have a faster or slower rate of decline. There is not good data on estimating the chance of each condition based on PFAS levels.

Steve Hajioff commented that the Panel will look at the literature for a dose response, it may be hard to find anything definitive. There is also some data on the distribution of PFAS in different body tissues, e.g. is it different in bone marrow and blood.

Tony Fletcher mentioned that there is some research on endocrine disrupting chemicals as a broader category. In some reviews PFAS are included in the category of endocrine disrupting chemicals.

Environmental issues were raised, and Steve Hajioff reminded people that the Panel will look at the environment in report 4.

Additional questions

Graeme Farmer commented that the Panel has settled people's minds and feeling much happier about the independence of the Panel. Steve Hajioff responded by saying that the Panel wants to continue to be open, this improves relationships, and dispels mistrust. Grace Norman commented that she was pleased to hear this feedback as it is important that the Panel is independent, and that Islanders understand that. Steve Hajioff continued by saying

that some people are more comfortable to meet in private and gave reassurance that this will be anonymous, and all identifiers removed so it cannot be traced back to an individual.

Steve Hajioff thanked Graeme and Joe for the discussion and confirmed that for those wishing to meet in private, their testimonies will be anonymous, and once information has been used, all correspondence will be destroyed. Only the Panel and a minute taker will be present at the private meetings, and those attending will be asked if they are comfortable with someone attending and taking notes. It will be optional, if people are happy, for Grace Norman to attend.

Steve also re-confirmed that people can meet in public, private or submit written information, and that the Panel needs consent to use the information given. If consent is not given, the Chair has offered to meet people and has met regularly with some Islanders but cannot use their information in the report without consent. The Chair will email people who did not give consent and repeat this offer.

Steve Hajioff asked Joe and Graeme to email after the meeting regarding whether they are comfortable for the recording to be shared and will be asked to check their section of the notes for accuracy.

It was agreed the default position for minutes regarding people testimonies should be brief with headlines only. Detailed notes would be available for the Panel only for the writing of the report.

Any other business

The Chair reminded people that there is a meeting with Ministers on 1 December regarding their response to report 1.

Date of next meeting

7 December. This is currently 10am to 1pm however the timing may change to suit other experts by experience. Times to be confirmed.

The Chair thanked Graeme and Joe for sharing their experiences and helping the Panel with the process of this report.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed.