

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

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

In attendance: Grace Norman – Deputy Director Public Health  
Plus support staff

**Welcome:**

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

*A recording of the meeting is available upon request via the [publichealth@gov.je](mailto:publichealth@gov.je) mailbox. There is a slight delay in the recording being available as appropriate checks are made to ensure anonymity of the observers attending.*

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

1. The 1st report is the current report which is in progress and 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 will be finalised in the next few weeks.
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. Also, what parts of the body it can impact upon and potentially the levels at which those impacts happen, depending on what evidence is found.
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. Therapeutic phlebotomy will be looked at again at that point.
4. The 4th report focuses on 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 available and any changes locally.

The chair mentioned that people could email the panel at [PFASpanel@gov.je](mailto:PFASpanel@gov.je).

**Introductions:**

The Chair and Panel members introduced themselves.

Dr Steve Hajioff, Independent Panel Chair: A background as a physician and a retired Director of Public Health from an area of London with two major international airports and a variety of other environmental challenges. He also worked for many years in designing and conducting clinical trials.

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, Sweden.

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, subject to the following changes.

A point of clarity was flagged on page 6 following a query from an Islander. The total PFAS sum refers to the 8 different analytes found in the blood samples from people in Jersey. (A total of a specified sum is also to be corrected on page 5).

To make it clear that twice the background level is probably the level below which the impact of phlebotomy becomes increasingly undetectable.

To note that the minutes are draft prior to the approval at the following Panel meeting and should be labelled as such so people know they are not final. The amended minutes from 6 September meeting will be available on the website.

### **Matters arising**

None.

### **Additional findings since last meeting**

#### Panel visited the Island

The Panel visited the plume area yesterday. This was informative for the Panel to increase their understanding of the geography of the area.

#### Summary from 11 October meeting with Islanders

An event for affected Islanders took place on 11 October, where the first draft of report 1, an interim report on the feasibility of therapeutic phlebotomy was shared. Islanders were asked to give feedback and input into the report, with the deadline for responses being 25 October. Responses should be sent to [PFASpanel@gov.je](mailto:PFASpanel@gov.je). The draft report is available on the website. The Panel will include a summary of Islander responses and the Panel's responses as an appendix to the final report.

The event gave the opportunity for open discussion, with some important points made, many of which were pertinent to future reports. These points have been noted and will be brought back to the Panel when the relevant report is being considered.

Tony Fletcher commented that the report link could be more visible on the website. Grace Norman explained that there are many limitations with the Government of Jersey website including that she's been advised that it is not possible to have a page specifically for the Panel. The Chair agreed to pick up this discussion offline.

### Report 2 – An assessment of the impact of PFAS exposure on health

The second half of the public event on 11 October included engagement with Islanders around report 2. The main points to note were:

- The Panel want to hear from experts by experience who wish to give evidence about their experience of PFAS exposure and the impact on their health.
- Islanders can send a written testimony for consideration. There is a testimony form to complete. Please email PFASpanel.gov.je for a form if you do not already have one.
- Those wishing to share their experience would be invited to either speak in the public meetings, or in a private meeting with complete anonymity.

It was noted that if a therapeutic phlebotomy service is offered, that guidance and a summary of PFAS issues and risks would be helpful for GPs and other clinical staff. The importance of this was recognised although it was noted that this was outside of the remit of the Panel and will be picked up by Public Health.

Grace confirmed background work was already looking at how the service, if it were agreed, would be set up. The current assumption is that a haematologist may need to run the potential service. Noting that this is an emerging area of science. Islanders eligible for the service would need to be supported to make an informed decision about whether they wish to participate.

## **Report 2: Summary of key factors**

Report development process:

1. Assessing the latest scientific evidence internationally
2. Hearing the testimonies from affected Islanders (experts by experience)
3. Hearing evidence from subject matter experts internationally

The Panel will consider (this is not an exhaustive list and the Panel have asked for Islander input):

- The effects of PFAS exposure on animals
- How PFAS moves in and out of the human body and can it be passed from parent to child i.e., through breastfeeding
- Who might be at increased risk
- How to collate the relevant information to go to GPs and specialist medical experts for maximum benefit to those affected
- Important to look at the impact on mental health and wellbeing of environmental exposure to PFAS

## Literature Review

The following are process considerations:

- The scope needs to be proportionate to people's needs and within the resources available
- Whether individual health concerns are plausibly linked to the evidence available
- Animal data may provide additional evidence in addition to evidence from the human population and epidemiological studies

It was agreed literature reviews should be started now and the Panel said that they will speak to experts by experience in November and December and subject matter experts from January onwards. The Panel explained that they would like report 2 to undergo an academic peer review once it is in a draft stage, to ensure that there is appropriate academic rigour in the process.

A discussion took place about how to assemble evidence and a provisional division of tasks for preparing different sections of the report.

Steve Hajioff mentioned monitoring health information and ensuring all information is referenced. An example was given, of cholesterol, where there is a reasonable evidence link to PFAS.

Bradford Hill is a structured way of assessing evidence and the members discussed whether it would be a helpful tool for report 2. It was agreed to look in more detail at Bradford Hill viewpoints at the next meeting. (*Bradford Hill is a guideline which lists 9 headings which can help evaluate human epidemiologic evidence to determine if a causal link can be deduced*).

Grace Norman then checked that the Panel's intentions for chapter headings (as discussed at the event for Islanders the previous evening) were adequate to cover the items listed in the Panel's service specification, and it was confirmed that it does.

#### Calls for Experts by experience (Islanders) to come forward

It was clarified that there are 3 ways to hear from experts by experience for the report:

1. By joining the public meeting and sharing evidence, which can be shared publicly
2. By meeting in private with the Panel, however, their experience can be used in the report, anonymising them and not being identifiable
3. Providing a written testimony, either named or anonymised

#### Clarification around consent to share Islander information

The meaning and definition of consent was discussed, summarised as follows:

- Consent is needed in the context of data protection rules regarding the sharing of information
- Consent is required for the Panel to use information anonymously and for pooling common themes
- Consenting to information being used publicly

Without appropriate consent, information provided by Islanders cannot be used in the reports. However, Steve Hajioff said he would have off the record conversations with individuals if required.

#### Clarification about the plume area question on the consent form

It was noted:

- Those giving a testimony do not have to currently live in the plume area
- The definition of the 'plume area' used by Public Health is not restrictive and including St Peter, St Brelade, St Ouen. For information, no referrals for blood tests were received from anyone who had lived outside of those areas in the relevant time period.

It was confirmed that all testimonies, when the report was finalised, would be destroyed in line with data protection rules. Anonymised information will be cited in the reports.

Further confirmation was needed about whether recorded public meetings, where a testimony was given, would be retained or destroyed. Public Health will seek advice on this matter.

The format for discussions for talking to experts by experience was not yet finalised, as the numbers wishing to give a testimony is not yet determined (for the meetings on 16 November and 7 December). The planned allocation was to hear from 8 people, although there can be flexibility.

A reminder to fill out the testimony form (*email PFASpanel.gov.je for a copy of the form and return to the same email. Postal copies to be sent confidentially to Grace Norman at Public Health*).

### Subject Matter Expert – topic areas

A general discussion took place about the types of subject matter experts to speak to, for example these may include:

- Toxicologists
- Epidemiologists (general and PFAS experts)
- Risk and risk assessment experts
- Reproduction, pregnancy, and children's health experts
- Peer review contacts for after the report is drafted
- Principal investigators on PFAS reviews elsewhere

It was noted that the preference is to focus on PFAS experts largely over generalists, and generalists should only be used where there is a need for additional evidence.

### **Summary and recap**

- The Panel have a general idea of subject matter experts by areas of expertise, with primary focus on PFAS experts
- It is important for the Panel to engage experts by experience
- The Panel talked about the reviews and the structure
- Discussed a separate review of mental health impacts resulting from environmental concerns
- Impact on specific risk groups
- Introductory conversations around the understanding of risk

### **Any other business**

There was no other business.

### **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next Panel meeting is 16<sup>th</sup> November, at 10am (*Online*).

The Chair thanked all participants and observers.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed.