

Trust Headquarters
Marlborough Street
Bristol, BS1 3NU
Tel: 0117 342 3720
Fax 0117 925 6588
Email: Robert.woolley@uhbristol.nhs.uk
Web-site: www.uhbristol.nhs.uk

5 February 2014

Dear Colleague,

I am writing further to my letter of 10 January, regarding the inquest into the death of Sean Turner in spring 2012, following congenital heart surgery at the Bristol Royal Hospital for Children, which concluded on 23 January.

The Coroner heard that Sean was born with a rare and complex heart condition and had undergone a procedure which carries recognised risk. In a narrative judgment, however, she said that there were lost opportunities to render medical care or treatment to Sean in the post-operative period and she identified two specific aspects of his medical care. I therefore made a public apology to Mr and Mrs Turner and their family.

The Coroner said that there was no evidence of a failure to provide basic care to Sean. She said that was aware of the actions taken by the Trust following his death and she therefore did not make any recommendations for further action. We will nonetheless ensure that we have learned all possible lessons for the future care of children like Sean.

Congenital heart surgery is a high risk service. We are able to treat children today who in the past would simply not have survived the conditions they were born with. There will unfortunately always be adverse outcomes for some of these children. Independent analysis nonetheless shows that our results are comparable to other national centres for this type of surgery.

Further inquests for children with heart conditions are listed in the coming months and, although the circumstances in each case are different, they will doubtless attract media attention. We seek always to balance our duty to maintain the confidence of families under our care and the wider public, to support our staff in the difficult work they do and to be open and honest with families when things go wrong.

I hope you find this letter helpful. If you have any questions, please do contact me.

Yours faithfully,



Robert Woolley
Chief Executive