

## CHECEK AGAINST DELIVERY

## VIRTUAL LAUNCH SPEECH 16 DECEMBER

1. Good Morning.
2. Welcome to this launch of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'First Do No Harm.'
3. Thank you for joining us, and its particularly good to have the patient campaigners, fellow parliamentarians and members of the media to this virtual launch today.
4. I am also joined by members of the Review team who worked with me so hard for 2 1/2 years - Sir Cyril Chantler, Simon Whale, Dr Valerie Brasse and Dr Sonia McLeod.
5. You will all know that when you are asked to undertake a challenging task, the most important job you have to do is to choose the very best people to form the team, I can tell you without exception these are the very best, but before I get totally carried away I have to start with some technical points about how we are going to run this hour's meeting.
6. My fellow parliamentarians and I will be on-screen throughout this event. Other attendees do not have their cameras and microphones activated, but we have a Q&A function enabled. So if you would like to ask a question, please use that function. We will get through as many questions as we can in the hour we have available to us.
7. I am absolutely delighted that Jeremy Hunt – the former Secretary of State who commissioned our Review, and now Chairs the Health and Social Care Select Committee – is Co-Chair of our Group.
8. He has asked me to pass on his apologies, as he is unable to join today's meeting due to Parliamentary business.
9. I must also thank the Chairs of the APPGs on mesh, valproate and Primodos: Emma Hardy; Cat Smith and Yasmin Qureshi, who I look forward to working with in their capacities as Vice-Chairs of this Group
10. So we are not starting from scratch as they with their Groups have been working in their own spheres to ensure their members are kept informed, are supported, and that pressure on the Government is exerted to bring about improvements for their patients who have been affected.
11. Lord O'Shaughnessy and Sharon Hodgson will join them as Vice-Chairs, as will Lord Patel and Lord Philip Hunt of Kings Heath. I am very grateful to them for their support.

12. It has been five months since the publication of our report *First Do No Harm* and 2 1/2 years in which we, in the team, heard harrowing testimony and received a large volume of evidence concerning these three medical interventions: Primodos, sodium valproate and pelvic mesh.
13. The report makes uncomfortable reading, indeed stark reading.
14. It reveals how the healthcare system is siloed, disjointed and defensive. It reveals that thousands of patients and families have suffered harm, harm that was avoidable, and that the risk still remains.
15. Our report set out 9 major recommendations to bring much-needed help and support to those who have suffered as a result of these interventions, and it seeks to reduce the future risk from medicines and medical devices.
16. I am pleased to say that our first recommendation - *"that the Government must immediately issue a fulsome apology on behalf of the healthcare system to the families affected by Primodos, sodium valproate and pelvic mesh – was delivered by the Secretary of State and Ministers, immediately after the report was published.*
17. We thank the Secretary of State and the Government for recognising the need to acknowledge these failings, and to do so, so swiftly.
18. That leaves 8 recommendations.
19. Like many of you, over the past 5 months, I have been pressing the Government to respond to the report and to those outstanding recommendations.
20. I want to thank the many parliamentary colleagues, from all sides in both Houses, who have persisted in asking questions and raising the issues in debates.
21. By good luck, we have been fortunate that the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill has been going through Parliament in recent months.
22. In the Lords I and others have tabled a number of amendments to the Bill that would bring the *First Do No Harm* recommendations into effect. I have been overwhelmed by the support that I have had from so many Peers, and I thank them for that.
23. One of the most important recommendations in our report was that an independent Patient Safety Commissioner be appointed.
24. This person of standing would be the first port of call for patients, their listener and advocate.

25. He or she would detect safety concerns, and encourage or require the healthcare system to act and to hold the system to account for its actions.
26. We are convinced that had there been a Patient Safety Commissioner before now, much of the suffering we have witnessed could have been avoided.
27. I tabled an amendment to the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill at Committee Stage that would bring the independent Patient Safety Commissioner into being. Unfortunately, although it was supported by dozens of peers, the Government did not accept my amendment.
28. But since then my team and I have held a number of positive discussions with the Lords Health Minister, Lord Bethell and officials. They have been patient, have listened and I am very pleased to say that the Government has now accepted the need for a Patient Safety Commissioner for England and is bringing forward its own amendment to the Bill - to establish this post.
29. We have seen the Government's draft amendment and, while there are certain matters on which we need reassurance - not least ensuring the Commissioner is truly independent - we are hugely encouraged by it. I want to thank Matt Hancock, Lord Bethell, Jo Churchill, Nadine Dorries and DHSC officials for working so hard to bring this about.
30. That is the good news. But we have received no indication as to the Government's thinking about the other 7 recommendations.
31. Recommendations that – while wide ranging and radical – we know will improve the lives of people who have been harmed and make the system safer in the future.
32. That is after all why the Review was announced, out of a recognition that these three interventions caused so much anguish and suffering, and ruined the lives of many. As one woman told us:
33. *"This device took everything from me: my health, my life, my job, my dignity, my marriage, my freedom."* She went on to say *"There are a lot of us suffering."*
34. The scale of the suffering we witnessed means that nothing short of profound change is urgently necessary - not necessary in a couple or three years but now. Those who suffer cannot wait, when every day requires courage and determination to get through the next 24 hours.
35. This APPG has been created to ensure the Government rights the wrongs that we learned about, and makes the system safer for the future.

36. The consensus in favour of this need for change is a remarkable one, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank patient groups, Royal Colleges, professional bodies, public institutions, and parliamentarians of all parties and none, for their unwavering support.
37. While talking about consensus it is worth me mentioning the support we have received from the Scottish Government, who have committed to implement all of our recommendations that they have the power to implement.
38. The Review team met with Jeane Freeman earlier in the year and we were struck by how committed she and the First Minister are to change – and I hope the Government in London follows in their footsteps.
39. This new APPG will leverage the political weight of its wonderful Vice-Chairs and Officers in holding the Government to account within the corridors of Westminster.
40. It will provide a vehicle through which patient groups can join forces and keep up-to-date with this campaign.
41. It is, after all, on the patients' behalf's that we undertake this work.
42. So in a nutshell our purpose is to raise awareness and build support for the recommendations in *First Do No Harm*, and to ensure the implementation of the recommendations by the UK Government and others.
43. You will have read that we have invited the Minister for Patient Safety, Nadine Dorries, to attend the first public meeting of this Group.
44. I hope she accepts this invitation, and that the meeting will provide all those who attend a valuable update on the Government's thinking.
45. We hope that meeting will be early in the New year– we will update you as soon as we know more.
46. As for further meetings, those will be decided by the officers of this Group, and we will of course be consulting patient groups and others.
47. It is our intention that this meeting is the first of many.
48. I hope today has served as a reminder that while the Review has concluded and published its report, this is not the end of the fight.
49. That should already be clear to those of you that know me, but it's worth repeating.
50. We've still got some way to go, but this Group will be fighting every step of the way.

51. Thank you.