

'Poor' response from NHS trust after boy died

By **Laura Donnelly**
HEALTH EDITOR

THE "closed culture within the NHS" has been attacked in an investigation into the death of a three-year-old boy at Stafford Hospital in 2014.

The independent report, which calls for a fresh inquest, followed accusations that the hospital had attempted to cover up its failings by forging statements from staff. Jonnie Meek, from Cannock, died while



Jonnie Meek, aged three, died while in the care of Stafford Hospital

being fed via his stomach in August last year.

His parents said their son, who had a rare genetic condition, suffered an allergic reaction to a type of milk which had made him ill on previous occasions.

This had been denied by a trust investigation, a post-mortem and a coroner's inquest, which ruled pneumonia was the apparent cause of Jonnie's death.

Paediatrician Dr Martin Farrier, who carried out the

review, said the parents explanation was the most likely, but called for a new inquest to examine the evidence. He said Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust had offered a "poor" response to Jonnie's family and concluded "there is little evidence of the open culture that is aspired to by the NHS".

Jonnie, who was born with a rare congenital disability called de Grouchy syndrome, died on August 11 2014 after being admitted to hospital to trial being fed directly into his stomach.

He had previously had bad reactions to the same feed.

After his death his parents pursued their complaint, and found that statements from health workers who had witnessed his death had been falsified.

They also said the trust falsified the child's medical history to suggest the boy was sicker than he had been before admission to hospital.

The report criticised Mid Staffordshire Trust, which was dissolved in Nov 2014, for its failures to consider their concerns.

Andrew Donald, chief officer at Cannock Chase Clinical Commissioning Group, said he accepted the report and would try to help the family secure a new inquest.

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