

## **Learning from Bristol:**

The Department of Health's Response to the Report of the Public Inquiry into children's heart surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary 1984-1995

Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Health by Command of Her Majesty January 2002

Communication between health care professionals, children and their parents or carers

Recommendations 187 – 191

Recommendation 187

Parents should ordinarily be recognised as experts in the care of their children, and when their children are in need of healthcare, parents should ordinarily be fully involved in that care.

Recommendation 188

Parents of very young children have particular knowledge of their child. This knowledge must be valued and taken into account in the process of caring for the child, unless there is a good reason to do otherwise.

Recommendation 189

Children's questions about their care must be answered truthfully and clearly.

Recommendation 190

Healthcare professionals intending to care for children should be trained in the particular skills necessary to communicate with parents and with children.

Recommendation 191

Healthcare professionals should be honest and truthful with parents in discussing their child's condition, possible treatment and the possible outcome.

3.15 We agree with the Kennedy Report's view that parents are normally the experts on their own children and that they should be fully involved in their care and treatment. How to achieve a greater involvement of parents and children in planning care will be a theme of the NSF. Consent – what you have a right to expect emphasises the child's right to ask questions about their care and treatment and the Reference Guide to Consent for Examination or Treatment reinforces the importance of responding truthfully to patients' questions, be they adult or child. We have already acknowledged the importance of equipping health care professionals with the skills for good communication in this Response and set out proposals for doing this.

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