

## Statement from Dr Geraldine Strathdee, 28 June 2023

Today, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Steve Barclay, announced that the Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry will be granted statutory status under the Inquiries Act 2005. I requested these powers for the Inquiry from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and I whole heartedly welcome this news.

I am confident that statutory status will allow the Inquiry to deliver a full and robust report and make recommendations that will lead to much needed improvements.

While I remain dedicated to the cause of the Inquiry, I have taken the very difficult decision to hand over the role of Chair. In my view the next stage of the Inquiry's work requires a Chair who is available for the entire forward duration of a statutory Inquiry. Due to personal health reasons, I have decided with my family, that this cannot be me.

In my role as Chair, I have been deeply honoured by the courage and trust of so many families and witnesses who shared their accounts with the EMHII team and me. I've been personally deeply touched by the experiences shared by those who have lost loved ones and have been mental health inpatients themselves. While I have spent my lifelong career working to improve mental health services, it has been a humbling opportunity to hear directly from those affected about what changes need to be made and I am inspired by the thoughtful insights and practical recommendations for improvements they have made. I will now take all of this learning to a new a Chair – and handover the great privilege of leading this Inquiry.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of the Inquiry's witnesses and all of those who have been in touch to share their views and evidence. I also want to thank my committed and professional team, in them, I know I am leaving the Inquiry in safe hands.

I will be ever thankful to have had the opportunity to serve as Chair to this Inquiry.