

The CQC has settled the proceedings brought against it by Jill Finney, its former Deputy Chief Executive. The proceedings arose from the publication on 19 June 2013 of a report into the CQC's regulation of the University Hospital Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust (UHMB), produced by Grant Thornton LLP. The CQC had previously committed itself to publishing Grant Thornton's report, which came to the conclusion that Ms Finney may have been party to a "cover up" of a report into the CQC's regulation and oversight of UHMB, something she and others have always emphatically denied.

From the interview stage, Ms Finney and others were highly critical of Grant Thornton's fairness and processes including their interviewing, note-taking and record-keeping techniques. She complains that she was not even given advance notice of the allegations to be levelled at her in the interview.

The CQC deeply regrets its decision, taken on legal advice, to withhold the names of individuals in the report, as promised to Ms Finney and others. It then had to reverse that decision after names, including Ms Finney's, appeared in the media as a result of speculation by journalists. The consequences for Ms Finney were aggravated by the fact that some of the national media wrongly portrayed the internal report as being about maternity deaths at UHMB. Further, due to confusion caused by an IT failure, the CQC failed to inform Ms Finney that her name had been released until 18 hours later, by which time she had been summarily dismissed from her then employment.

The CQC accepts that Ms Finney was thereby disadvantaged in protecting her reputation and giving her public defence to an allegation which she has always denied; in addition, she suffered considerable distress. The CQC wishes to take this opportunity to apologise to her and is happy to repeat what its Chief Executive Mr Behan wrote to her at the time of her departure in February 2013: *"you have been a rock of stability in CQC leading with passion, energy and dedication. You have given much, and people have testified to this."*