

Gosport Independent Panel

Family Liaison Meeting Wednesday 25 January 2017

Note of meeting

Hornet Services Sailing Club, Haslar Road, Gosport, Hants

Present: Family members; members of the Gosport Independent Panel (Bishop James Jones, Christine Gifford, Deborah Sturdy, David Hencke, John Pounsford) and Secretariat (Louise Dominian, Judy Joslin, Melanie Pepper, **Code A**)

Code A

Welcome

1. The Bishop welcomed everyone to the meeting including those families attending a meeting for the first time and said that the Panel was encouraged by the number of families coming to the quarterly meetings. The Bishop said it was important to share thoughts both formally and informally at meetings and that over lunch was a good opportunity to meet other families and Panel members and chat informally. The Bishop was joined at the meeting by the members of the Family Sub-Group (Deborah Sturdy, David Hencke and Christine Gifford).
2. At the November meeting, the Bishop had informed families that Colin Currie had resigned and that he had asked the Minister to appoint a replacement. As a result, the Bishop was pleased to announce that Dr John Pounsford has now been appointed to the Panel as the specialist geriatrician Panel member. He would introduce himself later in the meeting. The Bishop said that the expertise on the Panel resulted from listening to families' concerns and questions and then searching for the expertise to address those questions.
3. The Bishop informed families that Deborah Sturdy had been awarded an OBE for services to older people, dementia care and nursing in the New Year's Honours List and offered his warm congratulations to Deborah. The Bishop said this underlined the seniority of expertise on the Panel.
4. The Bishop also extended his thanks to all those families who had congratulated him on his recent Knighthood and said that the greatest honour was being of service to the Hillsborough families and the Gosport families themselves. Recognising that people have differing views of the Honours system, the Bishop suggested that it acknowledged the national significance of work people were involved in. In the case of Hillsborough, the families saw that they were engaged in an endeavour that was important beyond their own circumstances, feeling strongly that it was important for Liverpool and the nation as a whole.
5. The Bishop reiterated the Panel's work was to interrogate documents and said that the Panel was well on its way in accessing the material it required. The Bishop reminded families that the Panel was funded by the Department of Health but that it was fiercely

independent, and was defined by its own Terms of Reference. The Bishop emphasised that the Panel would not release information piecemeal to avoid setting hares running with the risk of detracting from the impact of the final report. Families' concerns are paramount to the Panel.

Panel introductions

6. For the benefit of families attending their first meeting, the Bishop invited Panel Members to introduce themselves:

David Hencke was appointed to the Panel for his investigative journalism experience and expertise and had worked for the Guardian newspaper and investigated various episodes in Parliament, including the 'cash for questions' scandal. Based on the analysis of documents, David's role is to draw together links and networks relevant to the events at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

Deborah Sturdy is a nurse of over 30 years' experience working with older people, including strategic service provision. Deborah was also a nurse adviser at the Department of Health for ten years. Deborah brings all her nursing expertise to bear on the issues raised. She is on the Panel to find out the truth, and she will not defend the indefensible.

Louise Dominian is the Secretary to the Panel and oversees all the resources needed to carry out the Panel's work.

Christine Gifford is concerned with encouraging organisations to be more transparent and was involved in the drafting and implementation of the Freedom of Information Act. Christine led for the Hillsborough Independent Panel on Access to Information and Disclosure and is undertaking the same role on the Gosport Independent Panel. Christine has agreed to be the Panel's lead on the disclosure website which will be used to reference the Report of the Panel and provide an on-line archive of documentation.

Judy Joslin is the Family Officer and with Melanie Pepper is the first point of contact with families, with Lloyd Leslie providing additional help.

7. In their absence, the Bishop introduced the other Panel members, explaining Kate Blackwell QC brought legal expertise and had worked on the Shipman case. Jim Smith brought pharmacological expertise and is a former Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England. Duncan Jarrett is a former police commander with extensive investigative experience, and Bill Kirkup is an experienced public health doctor who has worked on the Morecambe Bay Inquiry, the Savile investigation relating to Broadmoor Hospital and the Hillsborough Independent Panel.
8. The Bishop invited the new Panel Member, Dr John Pounsford to introduce himself. John said it was a great pleasure to be appointed to the Panel. John is a specialist geriatrician at Southmead Hospital (part of North Bristol NHS Trust) with extensive experience in respiratory medicine. John gave an overview of his background, including his work at St George's Hospital on respiratory medicine and care of elderly patients at

Frenchay Hospital. He had previously been Clinical Director of Medicine heading up 13 medical specialties across two acute hospital sites and had worked in a 400 bed elderly care hospital. He has experience of reviewing all risks within an NHS Trust and was vice chair of the Clinical Risk Committee. John has also been actively involved in committees and has acted in advisory capacities for the British Geriatrics Society, British Thoracic Society and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

9. The Bishop referred to John's varied experience and said that knowing the histories of families' loved ones the Bishop believed that the Panel would benefit enormously from John's expertise.
10. The Bishop recalled that he had told families at the last meeting about his meeting with the Minister and his request for a short extension to the Panel's end date. The Bishop said that there had been some misrepresentation in parts of the media following the announcement of the extension and that he wanted to allay any fears that may have arisen as a result. The Bishop reminded families that in the beginning he had met with 8 families and that the Panel was now in contact with around 120 families. The local media had helped raise awareness of the Panel's work. Inevitably, a higher number of families has produced more documentation.
11. The Bishop reiterated that with the increase in the number of families, stakeholders and volume of documentation, it became clear that the Panel could not keep to the December 2017 deadline and therefore a short extension had been requested. The Bishop said that when he was invited to become Chair, he had reserved his position on the timescale because, at the time, he did not know the scale of the task ahead. The Bishop made clear that the extension from the end of 2017 to the spring of 2018 would be three to six months depending on factors such as the parliamentary timetable, and not two years as had been reported by some media.
12. The Bishop also made the point that everyone is of equal importance to the Panel – those families who have been involved throughout and those who have come forward more recently. The Bishop stressed that everyone's loved one is important to the Panel and all are of equal priority in the Panel's work.
13. The Bishop acknowledged a concern which had been raised that if further families come forward, this might further delay the Panel's report. The Bishop said that the Panel had agreed that it could now draw a line under its work to reach out to families with concerns and concentrate on the review of documentation.
14. The Bishop read out a statement that would be sent to the regional media after the meeting:

"We are over half way through the work of the Panel and are now in contact with more families with concerns about the historic care and treatment of their loved ones at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. I am grateful to the local media for raising awareness of the Panel's work; which has helped the Panel reach families who have concerns.

As announced in December, this led to the need for a small extension of less than six months from the end of December 2017 until the spring of 2018 to complete the Panel's work.

It is vitally important that all families who have come forward are treated equally and their concerns are properly examined by the Panel before we report”.

15. The statement would be added to the Panel's website, as would John Pounsford's biography (attached at the end of the meeting note for information).

Update on Information Management

16. Christine informed families that the Panel has 898,000 pages of information and that she expected this could reach one million. The volume of information to review was one of the reasons why the short extension to spring 2018 was sought. Christine explained that they were talking to all stakeholders about next steps, including redaction and disclosure.
17. Christine briefly recapped the process of 'redaction' (blocking out text and information before publication) which she had covered at previous meetings. Christine explained that the Panel's expectation was that unless there were very good reasons for doing so most of the information which had been supplied to the Panel would be put in the public domain. However she said that medical records and death certificates would not be put in the public domain in their entirety but that families would be able to have access to these documents if they wished to do so, the processes around which would be established later.
18. Christine explained that organisations would do their own redactions and any instances where an organisation indicated that it did not want certain information to be published would be carefully checked by Christine to establish whether this decision met the Panel's criteria and was justified. If an organisation insisted on redacting information that the Panel thought should be published, then the Panel would indicate where any disagreement had occurred in its report.
19. Christine said she had agreed to be the Panel's lead on the disclosure website, the online archive of documentation to ensure maximum possible public disclosure of all relevant information. Documents referred to in the report would be available on the disclosure website. Work has started on establishing what the requirements will be for the website to ensure that it is user friendly and a searchable resource, recognising that not everyone has access to or uses information technology.

Questions and answers

20. The Bishop invited questions and comments. In discussion the following points and questions were raised:
 - In response to a question asking if anyone would be brought to account in relation to events at Gosport War Memorial Hospital the Bishop reminded families of the

Panel's remit. The Panel's work involves interrogating documents, not people. The report will be laid in Parliament and it will be up to MPs to bring it to the attention of the appropriate authorities. In the case of Hillsborough, following the Hillsborough Independent Panel's report, the Attorney General applied to the High Court to quash the original inquests which started a further legal process. The Bishop reiterated that he did not know what the Gosport Independent Panel's report will say or how it will be taken forward. The Panel's remit is to review and analyse the documentation and write an account ensuring maximum possible public disclosure. However, if there is a case to answer, this would be another stage after the Panel had completed its work.

- A family member asked whether there was any possibility of a forum being set up for the Gosport families after the Panel has reported, similar to the one which has been established for the Hillsborough families for their next stage. The Bishop explained the background to the Hillsborough families' forum whereby Article 2 of the Human Rights Act was used to argue that families had a legitimate interest in the proceedings that followed. The Home Office and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) discussed how to engage with families without compromising the judicial outcome and from those discussions the idea of the forum emerged. The Bishop was invited to chair the forum and he accepted on the basis that families agreed to him being the Chair. The Bishop said a forum was clearly a possibility, but that he could not promise it, or indeed promise what would happen after the Gosport Independent Panel reported.
- It was noted that the Hillsborough situation was very different in that there had been two family support groups, both independent of the Panel, whereas there is no formal group to represent the Gosport families. The Bishop reminded families that the meeting room was always available before and after meetings if families wanted to discuss matters amongst themselves.
- The Panel was asked how many families of the cases investigated by the police had not made contact with the Gosport Independent Panel. The Bishop responded that he could not answer the question as it trespasses on identities. Reviewing previous investigations, including those undertaken by the police, are within the Panel's remit and under scrutiny. The Panel has used various means, including the local media to raise awareness of its work and to encourage anyone with concerns to come forward. The Bishop said the Panel had done its level best to reach as many families as possible.
- In response to a question about how the Panel attributed material received to the correct events, meetings and date, Christine explained that all material, including from families, was catalogued and digitised and identified as being from a particular source. Dates were not necessarily important, if they were not available or missing from the document, as the document management system used by the Panel is searchable in a variety of ways.
- In response to a family member recounting her experience of her mother's care and how she herself was treated by staff at GWMH when she visited and tried to

intervene, the Bishop reassured the family member that the manner in which her mother was cared for and complaints made were areas under review by the Panel.

- A family member shared a recent experience and highlighted that practices of poor care were still occurring and others too made comments and observations on whether there was any change in the NHS care of older people. John Pounsford outlined some of the changes which had occurred including the introduction of clinical governance that meant people were more accountable. The Bishop said the Panel was tasked with delivering its Terms of Reference and it was not the Panel's role to defend the past, present or future. The Bishop acknowledged that families wanted to see change from their past experiences and that the anxiety was about experiences 25 years ago, and about current care.
- In response to a question about the control of the amount of diamorphine prescribed and whether it was reasonable to expect a trained nurse to spot mistakes and take action rather than administer as instructed without question, the Bishop confirmed that the administration of medication was within the scope of the Panel's work. Without commenting on any specific example, Deborah said nurses have a right to challenge and a responsibility to the patient. This is in accordance with a registered nurse's responsibility and in compliance with the Nursing and Midwifery Council's Code of Conduct.
- The Bishop thanked families for sharing their personal stories and acknowledged that there was recognition around the room concerning the stories told. The Bishop reiterated that the types of historic concerns identified were within the scope of the Panel's work. The Bishop said that hearing families tell their stories underlines the Panel's resolve about the importance, including the potential national importance, of the Panel's work.

Next meeting – Wednesday 26 April 2017 (Hornet Services Sailing Club, Gosport)

Biography – Dr John Pounsford

Dr John Pounsford is a specialist in Care of the Elderly and has extensive experience in respiratory medicine. He is currently a Consultant Physician with responsibilities for care of the elderly and general medicine at Southmead Hospital in Bristol.

He has substantial experience working with primary care and represented secondary care in Bristol on a Primary Care Trust Executive Committee. He has advised on respiratory medicine at the British Geriatrics and British Thoracic Societies and was the England representative for the British Geriatrics Society Clinical Practice Evaluation Group. He has over 30 years' experience in teaching and is an examiner in Medicine at the University of Bristol and in Geriatrics at the Royal College of Physicians.