

Gosport Independent Panel

Family Liaison Meeting Wednesday 19 July 2017

Note of meeting

Hornet Services Sailing Club, Haslar Road, Gosport, Hants

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

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Welcome and update from the Chair

1. The Bishop welcomed everyone to the meeting and said he was very grateful that families continued to attend the quarterly meetings in large numbers, underlining the seriousness of families' concerns and the importance of the Panel's work.
2. In April, after the last Family Liaison Meeting, members of the Panel had visited Gosport War Memorial Hospital and had found it informative. After today's meeting the Bishop and two other Panel Members will visit the hospital to understand how the hospital was set out.
3. For the benefit of those attending a Family Liaison Meeting for the first time, the Bishop invited Panel Members to introduce themselves, noting that this meeting was not with the full Panel, but with the Family Sub-Group. Duncan Jarrett and John Pounsford were also in attendance.

Deborah Sturdy is a nurse with nearly 36 years of experience who worked with older people in both the community and acute hospitals in the late 1980s/90s. Deborah was also a nurse adviser to the Department of Health for 10 years. Deborah leads the work being undertaken by four very experienced nurses to review the medical records and is involved at both a strategic and operational level.

John Pounsford is a recently retired geriatrician with 30 years of experience, and has a particular interest in lung disease in older people.

David Hencke is an investigative journalist, who previously worked for the Guardian, with 35 years of experience, 23 of which were spent covering Parliament. David is looking at the media coverage of events at Gosport War Memorial Hospital and networks in the community.

Duncan Jarrett is an ex-senior police officer who was involved in complex investigations, including counter-terrorism and hostage negotiation, experience which he now applies to community negotiation and mediation in Hertfordshire.

Judy Joslin is the Family Officer and together with Melanie Peffer make up the Family Team. They provide the link between families and the Panel.

Louise Dominian is the Secretary to the Panel. She is responsible for the Secretariat who support the Panel in delivering its Terms of Reference to produce a report that will add to public understanding.

4. The Bishop said there had been a full meeting of the Panel yesterday where it was clear how important it is to have the experience of both a senior nurse and senior doctor on the Panel to understand what has happened in terms of care and treatment.

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She is as

determined as ever to continue and deliver the Panel's Terms of Reference.

6. The Bishop compared the Hillsborough narrative with the process of the Gosport Independent Panel.
7. The Bishop acknowledged that the Panel's important principle of 'no piecemeal disclosure' was frustrating for families who had waited so long for answers. However, it was important that information was not released piecemeal for fear of distorting the overall narrative or detracting from the Panel's final Report.
8. The Bishop explained that the notes of the Family Liaison Meetings were circulated to family members primarily for the benefit of those unable to attend. They are notes, not minutes, and do not name individual family members who speak in order to respect their privacy. The notes are intended as a summary to assure families that the Panel is 'on the case'. The Bishop said that families' continuing presence at meetings strengthened the Panel's resolve.
9. The Bishop said that information shared in plenary or in discussion afterwards is followed up if it suggests a new lead or piece of information to pursue. The Bishop said the meetings were intended to have mutual benefit and he hoped they were of benefit to families. He had observed mutual support emerging, even though it was not a formal family support group. The Bishop noted that by sharing experiences families found the stories of other families echoed their own experiences. The Bishop said it demonstrated families were not out on a limb, but part of a community of concern. The meetings also gave families an opportunity to question Panel Members face to face and assure themselves that the Panel was committed to the task.
10. At the April meeting the Bishop had explained that whilst an incoming Government was not bound by the decisions of the previous one, he fully anticipated that the Panel would continue after the May election. In the event, there had been no change in Government and both the Secretary of State for Health and the Minister in the Department of Health

responsible for patient safety and responsible for the Gosport Independent Panel in Parliament remain the same. The Bishop said that nothing is stopping the Panel's work.

11. However, the Bishop said that, in the current climate, there was some political uncertainty and as the Panel looks forward it has been assessing the risk of there being another general election next year. If there was a general election called in the Spring of next year, all government departments would enter into what is sometimes referred to as 'purdah' – essentially a restricted pre-election period which would mean the announcement of the Panel's Report would need to be postponed until after the general election. The Bishop said the Panel had therefore earmarked potential dates in both May and June in order to anticipate the risk of another general election. The Bishop stated that the Panel are therefore currently planning for May and June as the period when it will report.
12. By way of a brief update on information management, the Bishop reiterated that the Panel's task involves accessing all relevant documentation, reviewing and analysing that documentation and then writing a report which will add to public understanding of events. The Bishop said the Panel was working at pace to deliver its Terms of Reference and had accessed approximately one million pages of documentation; twice as many as the Hillsborough Independent Panel. The task of accessing documentation was almost complete, and analysis of that documentation was ongoing.
13. The Bishop said that when all families had been asked to share their documentation with the Panel they were also invited to raise any questions or concerns they had carried with them over the years concerning their loved one. As the Bishop had explained at the April meeting, family members have shared in the region of 800 questions over the lifetime of the Panel, the vast majority of which were about the care families' loved ones had received at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. Rather than look at several hundred individual – but often similar individual family questions and concerns separately, these questions have been grouped into four themes. The four broad themes where the Panel has registered there are family questions and concerns were described in detail at the April meeting and are briefly summarised below:
 - **Clinical** – families' questions and concerns relating to all aspects of the care and treatment of patients.
 - **Regulatory** – families' questions and concerns covering the conduct and activities of the various statutory authorities involved, including those organisations responsible for the conduct of the professionals involved in the Gosport narrative.
 - **Scrutiny** – families' questions and concerns referring to all aspects of the police investigations, including how families' complaints were handled.
 - **Networks** – families' questions and concerns about the relationships between individuals, organisations and the media.
14. The Bishop described the Panel's work as a mammoth task, the size of which reflects the extent of concerns that families have carried with them over the years.

15. The Bishop gave his word, in keeping with the families first principle, that families will be the first to have sight of the Report in its entirety on publication day. The Bishop said the Panel wanted to find a venue where families could read and absorb the Report whilst being protected from the media. A venue too, that would show reverence and dignity for families' loved ones. The Bishop said that the Panel had examined a shortlist of venues and had concluded that Portsmouth Cathedral is the strongest candidate. The Cathedral is big enough to accommodate families, and would be closed to the public that day ensuring privacy for families. Importantly, the media would be kept apart from families in a completely separate building. The Bishop said he welcomed comments and views from families, and if any thoughts occurred to families about the venue after the meeting they could contact the Family Team.
16. The format and arrangements for the day would be carefully planned, they would probably include a presentation by the Bishop and Panel Members to explain and help families understand the different sections in the Report, and an opportunity for families to ask questions. That same day the Report would be laid before Parliament and it was likely that a statement would be made perhaps by the Secretary of State for Health or possibly the Prime Minister. There would be interest from local media, and possibly national media and provision would be made to allow the media to cover the Panel's Report. The media may wish to interview families– but the arrangements put in place in terms of privacy for families would ensure those families who do not wish to have contact with the media on the day are protected.
17. The Bishop said that he had asked John Tunney, the press officer for the Hillsborough Independent Panel, to attend the October Family Liaison Meeting to speak about his experience and to give families a flavour of what will happen on the day. Consideration will be given to how to support those families who think they might want to speak with the media. The Bishop said there was also a duty of care to ensure those families who do not wish any contact with the media are protected. The Bishop reminded families that they are independent of the Panel –and that it would be for families to decide if and how they wanted to interact with the media.

Questions and answers

18. The Bishop invited questions and comments. In discussion, the following points and questions were raised:
 - In response to a family member's comments regarding the lack of support they had received in the past from MPs regarding events at Gosport War Memorial Hospital, the Bishop confirmed that politicians were within scope of the Panel's work under the networks theme. The Bishop reminded families that if they had kept any correspondence with MPs regarding events at Gosport War Memorial Hospital then it was not too late to share this with the Panel.
 - In response to a question regarding whether it was possible for morphine to be overprescribed, John Pounsford confirmed that it was possible to be given too much of any drug and that the Panel was looking into what medication was prescribed at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

- A family member wondered how many other families had received a call at 2am telling them that their loved one had passed away.
- The Bishop said the issue of prescription and care were both issues within the scope of the Panel's work under the clinical theme.
- A family member said that he and others believed the duty of care had been lacking both in terms of the administration of drugs and clinical procedures. On the regulatory side, the family member asked whether the Panel could give some hope in examining whether the statutory aspect of a duty of care had been contravened. The Bishop confirmed that the regulatory theme will look at the conduct and activities of the various statutory authorities involved, including the practice of the Coroner, General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and the Crown Prosecution Service.
- A family member asked whether the provisional dates being held in May and June next year could be shared with families now. The Bishop agreed the tentative dates (below) could be shared on the understanding that these are the potential dates currently being held. He asked families not to hold the Panel to these dates as they are not yet definite.

Tentative dates being held for the Panel to Report in 2018:

- Wednesday 16 May 2018
 - Wednesday 6 June 2018
 - Wednesday 13 June 2018
 - Wednesday 20 June 2018
- In response to a family member asking why a particular doctor was not given a prison sentence given what they had stated at the GMC hearings, the Bishop confirmed that any documentation that captured public statements by any professionals involved in events at Gosport War Memorial Hospital would be accessed and form part of the Panel's review, but that the Bishop was unable to comment further.
 - A family member asked whether other families had been given a photograph of their loved one by the hospital when they went to collect their belongings. The Bishop suggested people might want to raise this over lunch if they did not feel comfortable during the meeting.
 - A family member asked whether anyone was looking at the financial records regarding the amount of morphine requisitioned for use by Gosport War Memorial Hospital. The Bishop said that this would be looked at, if not already done so.
 - A family member raised the issue of setting up a Family Support Group, similar to Hillsborough. The Bishop reminded families that the meeting room was available for families' sole use after the meeting, and suggested that any families who were

sympathetic to the idea of a family support group should meet in the room afterwards and the family member who had suggested it could discuss their proposal with other interested families. This discussion took place after the Family Liaison Meeting had concluded between families only with no Panel Members or Secretariat present to safeguard the independence of families.

- The Bishop acknowledged the concern from a family member that because the Panel was not interviewing people, and was relying solely on reviewing documentation, a lot of information (for example, the care families witnessed with their own eyes) was not written down and therefore did not exist on file. The Bishop said that the strength of the Independent Panel process was being able to add to public understanding by producing a Report in a shorter space of time than other types of inquiry could achieve and also publish supporting documents alongside for families to read.
- A family member gave the example of the recently announced contaminated blood inquiry and asked whether there was any time limit on prosecuting a crime. Duncan Jarrett explained that there is no specific statute of limitations legislation. However, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Director of Public Prosecution and the Attorney General were entitled to take into account the protracted period from the offence to prosecution. An example is where the CPS considered this in the Hillsborough case and recently announced the prosecution of a number of people.
- The Bishop confirmed that due to the 'no piecemeal disclosure' principle he was unable to comment on the proportion of medical records that had been destroyed but that the Panel was accessing the available files in relation to Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

Next meeting – Wednesday 18 October 2017 (Hornet Services Sailing Club, Gosport)