

Gosport Independent Panel
Family Liaison Meeting 15 April 2015
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, David Hencke, Duncan Jarrett, Dr Colin Currie, Professor Jim Smith, Dr Bill Kirkup, and Deborah Sturdy) and Secretariat (Louise Dominian, Judy Joslin, Sarah Wishart, Peter Burgin and **Code A**)

1. The Bishop welcomed everybody to the meeting. He explained that this was the sixth time that he had met with families. A number of families had come forward since the announcement of the Terms of Reference and new Panel Members in December and this was reflected in the increased number of families present at the meeting and in contact with the Panel. The Bishop invited all families to introduce themselves and say who their loved ones were.
2. As this was the first meeting a number of families had attended, the Bishop set out the principles on which the Gosport Independent Panel's work was based. The Terms of Reference, which had been laid before Parliament, put families at the heart of the work of the Panel. Consultation with families at all stages of the Panel's work was clearly set out in the Terms of Reference. All families who had contacted the Panel would be invited to all meetings.
3. The Panel was funded by Government but was independent. The Panel would interrogate documents not people. They would access all documents across all organisations, analyse the documentation and write a report that added to public understanding. Any action following the report of the Panel would be pursued by the responsible authorities. An example was the Hillsborough Independent Panel where, following publication of the report, the Attorney General applied to the High Court and further inquests were now taking place. This demonstrated what could be achieved by the interrogation of documents.
4. The Bishop acknowledged that families' experiences over the past twenty years had resulted in a lack of trust of those in authority. The Panel's undertaking was that the report would be seen by the families first so they could be sure that it had not been altered in any way. The Bishop reiterated the point that information would not be released piecemeal as partial information could distort the story and reduce the impact of the findings.

Panel Member introduction

5. The Bishop explained that two further expert Panel members: Professor Jim Smith and Deborah Sturdy had been appointed to the Panel and families had been sent short biographies. He asked all Panel Members to introduce themselves.

Duncan Jarrett

A former Scotland Yard Commander with over 35 years investigative experience including advising Governments on the successful investigation and eventual destruction of terrorist groups. He was a Director of Hostage UK and had extensive mediation experience. He will bring all this experience and his integrity to his work with the Panel.

Deborah Sturdy

She has extensive senior nursing skills and expertise in caring and directing care for older people and people with dementia. She had worked in the Department of Health as Nurse Advisor for Older People. Nursing has a huge contribution to make to the Panel's investigation and she had the knowledge to understand historic practice.

Jim Smith

He has over 30 years' experience in the development and implementation of pharmacy, prescribing and medicine strategies including patient safety. He was the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England 2001 to 2005 and was involved in the Harold Shipman Inquiry. He also held senior posts in NHS Regional Health Authorities. He had been Professor of pharmacy practice and policy at Sunderland University. He is a member of the Fitness to Practise Committee at the General Pharmaceutical Council, had worked as a consultant for the World Health Organisation on pharmaceutical development in central and Eastern Europe and is a fellow of the Faculty of Public Health. He had had no previous professional involvement in the events at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. He brings to the Panel's work, all his experience on quality, professional regulation and his determination to find the truth.

Christine Gifford

She leads for the Panel on access to information. Her specialism is access to information with a background in addressing and overcoming the culture of secrecy. She had been a member of the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives, which advises the Government on the disclosure of highly sensitive information. She had been a member of the Hillsborough Independent Panel where she led on access to and disclosure of information with the outcome that no public sector organisation had refused access to their information.

Colin Currie

He had worked for 30 years in Geriatric Medicine, working in acute care and respite care in a number of roles. He had served as a Clinical Director responsible for the care of elderly beds. He had an interest in clinical management and clinical governance and was committed to looking after older people and better integration across services. He had been a Special Advisor in No.10 policy unit, where he had worked to promote the concept of integration of health and social care for older

people. He also had an interest in hip fracture, audit and care and would bring all this experience to the Panel's work.

David Hencke

He was a journalist with over 40 years' experience. He had started his career with regional newspapers moving to national papers, had been the Westminster correspondent for the Guardian and was now freelance. Over his career he had been involved in a number of long detailed investigations. He was used to pursuing documents and had found that it was important to build up information bit by bit and this was how he would approach his work with the Panel.

Bill Kirkup

He retired from the Department of Health in 2009 having held public health roles as the Northern and Yorkshire Regional Director of Public Health and Associate Chief Medical Officer. He had investigated the failure of children services at a hospital in Oxford. He had been a member of the Hillsborough Independent Panel, a member of the independent investigation into Jimmy Saville activities at Broadmoor Hospital and the Chair of the independent investigation into maternal and neonatal deaths at Morecambe Bay Hospital which had recently been published. He had also worked on public health reconstruction in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. He brought this experience and integrity, independence and pursuing to the Panel's work.

Information Management

6. Christine Gifford set out the current position on obtaining documentary evidence from organisations for the Panel. The Panel have been working for some months to identify organisations that might hold material. These documents would provide the evidence of what people did and thought at the time. This was a key difference between the Panel process and the judicial process which relied on people's memories.
7. Eighty five organisational or professional stakeholders had been identified and most had been contacted. New organisations were being continually identified and this was expected to continue. All these organisations had been provided with a document which sets out the expectations of the Panel in terms of full disclosure. This protocol was based on what had been used for Hillsborough but had been developed further. A handful of organisations had raised concerns about their legal ability to share information given to them in confidence. They have been provided with assurances on the basis of advice provided by a leading QC, that disclosure to the Panel is lawful within the protocol we have set out for them. These organisations had now informed the Panel that they are happy to proceed and are using the search terms provided for them
8. Christine explained that the Panel expected to see all the information they had. This included:-
 - Emails
 - Letters and any other correspondence whether general or specific
 - Reports of meetings
 - Medical records

- Complaint files
 - Discipline files
9. Nothing was exempted; because the Panel were acting under the authority of Parliament we expected to be given everything and anything which may relate in any way to the terms of reference. The Panel had asked for and expected to be provided with 'personal data' and 'sensitive personal data' as well as generic information. The Panel had registered with the Information Commissioner. Chief Executive Officers of all organisations would be required to sign an assurance that the Panel had been given access to all the information that they hold.
 10. A huge volume of material had already been identified which would be made available to the Panel. It was expected that processing would start in the next two or three months and material would continue to flow for at least the next year. As material became available it would be fed into the research process which would run in parallel to the search for information.
 11. Family information was very important to this process; it enabled the Panel to identify links and confirm there was nothing missing from the information which had been made available to us from organisations. Families had fought very hard for justice and their information would enable the Panel to ensure that the picture was complete.

Family Questions and concerns

12. The Bishop explained that family questions and concerns about the events at Gosport War Memorial and their aftermath had been very important in helping shape the Terms of Reference. Families' questions would help shape but would not define the research and investigation process. Whilst the Panel would address family questions, it would follow wherever the documentary evidence, led it.
13. Families had through earlier discussion and correspondence already raised a number of questions and concerns which had been captured. This was another opportunity for questions and concerns to be raised. As well as discussion at the meeting, there was a family question box in which families could post their questions. All families (including those not at the meeting) would be able to raise their questions either in writing or in discussion by contacting Judy Joslin the Family Officer.
14. Family questions would be initially grouped into four main themes:-
 - **Care** - this theme covered the initial care and treatment of family relatives in Gosport War Memorial Hospital - how patients were cared for, fed and rehabilitated on the wards. Examples of family questions were:-
 - Why were patients sent to Gosport War Memorial Hospital and what were the expectations of their treatment?
 - Was the treatment and care from all staff appropriate?

- Did it meet the agreed standards, policies and regimes within the hospital at the time?
- How accurate was death registration?
- **Prescribing and administration of medicines** - the Bishop acknowledged that this was one of the major concerns for families. One of the biggest issues was whether and why drugs were written up before patients arrived on to the ward.
- **Ways of working** - this would cover decision making, record keeping, hierarchy and accountability at all levels. Family questions here included:-
 - Did the culture in Gosport War Memorial Hospital make it difficult for nursing staff to challenge what was happening there?
 - Were relatives and patients kept informed and consulted?
- **Investigations** - this was a significant area as it covered all the investigations that had taken place including :-
 - In-house investigations
 - Baker Report
 - Commission for Health Improvement
 - Police
 - General Medical Council
 - Nursing and Midwifery Council
 - Coroner/Inquests

15. The Bishop invited comments and questions. In discussion, the following points were made:-

- Questions and concerns were raised about access to information. It was reiterated that the Panel had requested and expected to see all relevant material. This would include minutes of meetings with politicians and private office discussions, the transcript of the GMC hearing that was heard in camera, Ministerial briefings and all archives held by local and national newspapers and medical records from the Haslar Hospital. Material in all formats had been requested from organisations including CD's.
- In order to understand the type of care that patients were receiving and whether it was palliative or rehabilitative care, all health professional notes including therapists and nursing notes would be examined.
- Questions about how the inquests were conducted were raised and concern was expressed about the inequity in funding of inquests where public organisations can be funded from the public purse but families cannot. These were noted by the Panel for investigation.
- It was confirmed that all evidence would be cross referenced including police statements and medical opinion with medical documents.

- Concerns about 'bed blocking' and the role opiates may have played were raised. It was confirmed that all possible connections would be investigated. The Panel would need to understand the chain of authority for decision making and accountability
- In response to concerns raised about the Rose Cottage mortuary, Panel Members said that there should be dignity after death and complaints about the mortuary would be investigated.
- It was confirmed that questions contained in material received from families would be recorded as family questions.
- Concern about the profile of the investigation and the number of families that had come forward was expressed. The Panel would like to engage with all families that have concerns about the historic care at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital. The Panel were currently looking at how this could be achieved; this would be discussed at the next Panel meeting.
- In response to a question on whether families were subject to confidentiality, clarification was given that there were no restrictions on what families could say to the Press about the Panel's work.

Any other business

16. The Bishop explained that he wanted families to have their own space so as to be independent from the Panel. The main meeting room would be available for families to use following the meeting but the Panel would be considering alternative arrangements going forward including possible new venues and would consult with families over meeting arrangements.