

**Gosport Independent Panel**  
**Family Liaison Meeting Tuesday 23 February 2016**  
**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, Duncan Jarrett, David Hencke, Dr Colin Currie, Professor Jim Smith, Dr Bill Kirkup) and Secretariat (Louise Dominian, Judy Joslin, Melanie Peffer [Code A]  
[Code A])

**Welcome**

1. The Bishop welcomed everyone to the meeting. At the last meeting the Bishop had reported that the Panel was in contact with well over 80 families. This number had increased and the Panel was now in touch with more than 100 families, some of whom were attending the Family Liaison Meeting for the first time. The Bishop said that he hoped the meetings gave families an opportunity to know that there were other people with concerns and that they were not a lone voice. For the benefit of families attending for the first time the Bishop asked Panel Members to introduce themselves.
2. Deborah Sturdy introduced herself as the nurse member on the Panel with expertise in caring and directing care for older people. Deborah had worked clinically as a nurse manager in the late 1980s and 1990s which covers the time period the Panel was looking at. Deborah had also worked at the Department of Health as a Health Nurse Advisor for Older People for 10 years.
3. Jim Smith is a pharmacist who has worked in different sectors in pharmacy spending most of his career in the NHS, including hospital pharmacy. He was director of drug and poisons information for the North East of England and was Chief Pharmaceutical Officer at the Department of Health. He also taught pharmacy and therapeutics for 5 years. Jim is still active in the profession and is a member of the Fitness to Practise Committee at the General Pharmaceutical Council. Jim's particular interest is in ensuring that medicines are prescribed safely, and in the detection and reporting of drug side effects.
4. Colin Currie, as a consultant geriatrician in Edinburgh for 30 years, was widely involved in the care of older people: looking after patients in rehabilitation, respite, continuing, and palliative care, and in acute orthopaedic wards. He led initiatives in developing national standards for the care of older people in Scotland, and in inspecting services for them; and in developing and auditing standards in hip fracture care. He also reviewed unresolved serious complaints in NHS Scotland; and served as a Clinical Director and subsequently a Medical Director of an NHS Trust: posts which involved deep involvement in clinical governance. As a special adviser in the No. 10 Policy Unit from 2008-2010, he carried out research and policy development on the integration of health and social care services for older people.

5. David Hencke explained that he was on the Panel as an investigative journalist and had spent many years covering issues in Westminster. David would use his investigative skills to focus on understanding the networks and connections operating, to find answers to their questions about what had happened and why it had taken so long.
6. Christine Gifford is leading on access to information and disclosure, the same role she had on the Hillsborough Independent Panel. Christine said her background was firstly in the police service then in the area of openness and transparency in government. Christine was part of the team that drafted the Freedom of Information Act and had been an adviser to two Lord Chancellors. Christine recognised the tremendous challenge for the Panel in accessing all the documents.
7. Duncan Jarrett is a former police officer with a background in counter-terrorism and he is also a commercial and community mediator. Duncan said his primary responsibility on the Panel was for the investigation. Duncan referred to the Panel's wide range of skills brought together to review everything that had gone on before. He suggested they had to be better than the past by not working in silos and working together to review all of the data.
8. Bill Kirkup is a doctor with a background initially in in obstetrics and gynaecology and then public health. Bill had spent the last 6 years doing investigations, including the Savile inquiry relating to Broadmoor Hospital and more recently the Morecambe Bay Investigation and his interest was to find out the truth.
9. Louise Dominian is the Secretary to the Panel and is responsible for the team of people in the Secretariat who support the Panel's work.
10. By way of background for new families, the Bishop explained how he first met with a small number of families to listen to their questions and concerns. These had help shape the Panel's Terms of Reference which were laid before Parliament in December 2014. The Bishop then went in search of the appropriate expertise and skills to form a Panel that would be able to fulfil the Terms of Reference.
11. The Bishop explained that the Panel's work in accessing information and prioritising it was well underway. The Bishop explained that he now wanted to create a sub-group of the Panel to develop relationships between the Panel and families and to provide a conduit for families, stressing that the door was not shut to families to continue to raise questions. The members of the Family Liaison Sub-Group would be the Bishop, Deborah Sturdy, David Hencke and Christine Gifford. The sub-group would meet with families at the next meeting on 25 May and again in July. The whole Panel would come together again to meet with families in November.
12. The Bishop encouraged families to continue passing their questions to the Panel and said that there was no bar to any question families might want to ask. However, the Bishop reiterated the Panel's decision not to release piecemeal any information that they find. There were two reasons for this: firstly, the Panel did not want to set hares running that might distort the overall narrative. The Bishop asked families to trust the Panel as they assimilate the material, analyse it and write a final report. Secondly, the Bishop explained that if the Panel were to drip-feed information, people, including the media, would get fed up and again the Panel did not want to detract from the impact of the final report. The Bishop said he would not provide the media with access to information in return for

favourable coverage and repeated the commitment that families would see the report first before the media and those in authority.

13. At the July meeting the Bishop had updated families on the meeting held with the Department of Health Minister responsible for the Gosport Independent Panel. Since then the Bishop had met with the Permanent Secretary, the top civil servant in the Department of Health, to brief her about the Panel's work. Although the Panel's funding comes from the Government through the Department of Health, the Panel is independent of the Department of Health and can go wherever the documents lead the Panel. The Panel is not directed by the Department of Health and it is the Panel that would decide who/what it investigates within its Terms of Reference.
14. The Bishop said that the Permanent Secretary had been very supportive of the Panel's work and the Panel's commitment to the families' first principle. The Permanent Secretary respected the Panel's independence and that there should be no interference from the Department of Health. The Bishop had outlined the Panel's methodology to the Permanent Secretary including listening to families to seek their input to the Terms of Reference first before appointing relevant expertise to the Panel; and she thought that the methodology could be usefully replicated by other investigations.
15. The Bishop told the Permanent Secretary that the Panel intended to report by the end of 2017, with the caveat that the Panel was still accessing material so the final volume was not yet known. The Bishop had made it clear to the Permanent Secretary that it was only once the Panel knew how much material was available that he would be able to say when the work would be finished and how much it would cost.
16. The Bishop said that he was very conscious of the emotional pressure created for family members being reminded of the events at Gosport. The Panel had compiled a leaflet, the back cover of which read *'The Gosport Independent Panel recognises that there are families who have been affected by past events at Gosport War Memorial Hospital and that re-visiting their concerns could bring back difficult memories. This leaflet provides some suggestions for sources of information, support and counselling in case needed'*. Families would be offered a leaflet at the end of the meeting and it would also be available on the Panel's website. The Bishop described the leaflet as a symbol of the Panel's recognition that it was not an easy time for families as they revisit events.

#### **Update on information management**

17. Christine said that the Panel was now in contact with 115 professional stakeholders, including both organisations and individuals (this number does not include families). The stakeholder list was being added to every day and may lead the Panel in directions that were not obvious at the beginning. Christine indicated that a huge amount of information was being collected and she explained that the Panel was using a document management system called Relativity to manage the hundreds of thousands of paper pages.
18. Christine said that the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) had written to those families where the NMC held information relevant to the Panel's work. Christine reassured families that the Panel had been talking to the NMC since the announcement of the Panel in December 2014 and that she had left the NMC in no doubt about how dissatisfied she was with their approach which had caused some families concern and distress. Christine said that there could be a further couple of organisations holding family material who may decide to

contact families. Christine had spoken to these organisations to ensure that they handle any communications properly and sensitively. Christine reiterated that huge amounts of information was coming in and that there were no problems at all with access as far as core material from key stakeholders was concerned.

19. Christine thanked families who had kindly shared their material with the Panel. Some families had large archives of information and Christine said she knew how precious it was to them. All this material was being put onto Relativity, the Panel's document management system, and Judy would make arrangements with families for its return once the material had been processed.
20. Christine explained that when the Panel was ready to report its findings the first priority would be for families to see the report first and a disclosure event for families would be organised. This would be the first that families would know of the findings. Everything the Panel said in the report would be supported with reference to a document – which may involve a family's relative; the Panel would not say anything which could not be supported by reference to documents which had been accessed.
21. The report would probably not answer all individual, specific questions. Personal files would however be created for all families who would have the opportunity to have individual, private appointments after the report is published - if they wish – about their relative. Further information about these arrangements will be available closer to the time.
22. When Judy and her team return family material they will talk to families about whether they are happy to allow the Panel to put their material in the public domain. Christine said that she recognised some of the material was very private and personal but that she would ask families to think very carefully about allowing the Panel the privilege of putting it in the public domain in its entirety and unredacted (i.e. unedited with no content removed).

### **Questions and answers**

23. The Bishop invited questions and comments. In discussion the following points were made:
  - In response to a query asking whether a reply to the NMC letter was needed, it was explained that this would depend on the wording of the letter that had been received and whether it was simply informing families that material would be released to the Panel. It was noted that the letter from the NMC had in some instances been sent to an old address; in view of this the Family Team would ask families to indicate whether and when their current address had last changed, so that any organisation planning to write to families could be informed.
  - In response to a question asking whether family questions received by the Panel could be shared with all families in case they spark further questions or revealed common ground, the Bishop said that the Panel had a responsibility of confidentiality towards families who had come forward but that the Panel would keep the sharing of family questions under review. The Panel had a broad canvas of questions from families covering huge areas of concerns, but it was important that families should continue to make the Panel aware of any questions they have.
  - In response to a question on whether the information received by the Panel included the advice given to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), it was reiterated that the Panel could

not comment on the specifics of the information received or from whom, but it could be confirmed that no organisations had refused to work with the Panel to supply information.

- The Bishop, in response to a mention about the Panel's QC, said that Kate Blackwell (QC) had sent her apologies due to her involvement in a court case. The Bishop said that Kate brought a wealth of experience, including on inquiries, to the Panel.
- It was confirmed that the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) fell within the scope of the Panel's Terms of Reference and were one of the stakeholders who had been mentioned earlier.
- The observation was made by one family member who was involved in local patient groups that the local health community in Gosport seemed to be 'getting its house in order' for example, regarding continuing care, same-day appointments etc. The Bishop reminded families that the Panel was concerned with historic concerns.
- The Panel was receiving material in significant volumes and it was thought that this would be in the order of hundreds of thousands of pages.
- Two families indicated that they had reported their concerns to the police at the time but had not heard anything further from the police. The Panel was helped by identifying any actions that families had taken at the time (such as contacting the police or speaking to the media) so that the Panel could establish whether any documents were produced as a result. The Panel are only able to look at documents and would be relentless in their search for material.
- In response to a query on how far back the Panel was going it was explained that after listening, talking to and learning from families the Terms of Reference had deliberately not given a restricted time band. This gave the Panel a degree of independence to be guided by the documents they find. It was confirmed that the early 1980s was well within the historic boundary the Panel was looking at.
- One family recalled that the police had held several meetings with families at the time and there would be documents arising out of those meetings.
- It was confirmed that the Panel's report would not prevent any further action being taken. If there was a case to answer it would be through the next process, the judiciary and/or other bodies. The Hillsborough report had added to public understanding and the supporting documents were published. After Hillsborough, the Attorney General had applied to the High Court to quash the original inquests which started the legal process to open inquests into all 96 Hillsborough deaths. The Hillsborough Independent Panel's report was taken forward by the judicial process, a verdict on the inquests will be returned and the CPS, with evidence from the Coroner's Court, will decide whether to prosecute and press charges. The Bishop said he could not answer or comment on what could happen in the case of Gosport. The Panel will lay their Report before Parliament whereupon it can be considered by the appropriate judicial authority. Kate Blackwell would be made aware of the point made in case she had anything else to add.

- In a response to a concern raised about the recent 'joint enterprise' ruling it was explained that this applied to a very specific set of circumstances, mainly involving the use of weapons. Kate Blackwell's view will be sought.

**Any other business**

24. The Bishop reminded families that the meeting room was available for their sole use after the meeting if needed.