

Portsmouth News 4th April 2001**HOSPITAL INVESTIGATION:** Alleged unlawful killing examined by ministers

The War Memorial Hospital at Gosport – at the hub of an unfolding drama after the death of a woman

Suspicious death is under microscope

by Brian Brady
The News

HEALTH ministers are keeping a close eye on the unfolding drama at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital, it emerged today.

The Department of Health is refusing to comment officially on an investigation into the alleged unlawful killing of an elderly patient at the hospital until the Crown Prosecution Service has completed its findings.

But sources disclosed the case is being tracked at the highest levels – and has already been brought to the attention of health secretary Alan Milburn's office.

The News revealed yesterday that the case centres on care the 91-year-old woman received at the hos-



Peter Viggers

MP passes papers on to colleague

GOSPORT MP Peter Viggers has passed papers on the case to his Eastbourne colleague Nigel Waterson.

The file had been given to Mr Viggers by Gillian Mackenzie, the daughter of the 91-year-old who is at the centre of the death probe. But he has passed them on to Mrs

Mackenzie's constituency MP, saying that he was satisfied that it was being properly handled by the police and by the Portsmouth HealthCare (NHS) Trust.

'I would only become involved if there was a breakdown of the normal authorities,' said Mr Viggers.

pital days before she died there in August 1998. The police investigation was launched after a complaint by her family.

A DoH source said: 'The department is keeping a very tight watching brief to see the outcome of the CPS investigation. If action needs to be taken as a result they will not hesitate to do that.'

Detectives working on the inquiry have interviewed a number of medi-

cal personnel at the hospital. They say no-one was arrested or questioned under caution.

Lawyers are now deciding whether there is sufficient evidence to pursue a prosecution for alleged unlawful killing.

If the go-ahead is given the deaths of as many as 600 elderly people could be re-examined.

A Hampshire police spokeswoman said: 'As part of our research, officers

have been collecting statistics at the hospital over a time period but that is a matter of routine.

'We have received no other complaints and we have not reviewed or asked for any other hospital files. We are only looking at this one incident.'

A spokesman for Mr Milburn said: 'This case is being investigated by the CPS so there is nothing further we can say about it at this time.'