

Brian Patterson
Coroners Unit
Steel House
11 Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9LH

6th January 2009

Dear Brian

Re: Operation Rochester – Deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital

You may know that I am undertaking these Inquests as David Horsley's Deputy and the Ten Inquests are listed to start on 18th March 2009 with a time estimate of eight weeks.

My work on the file causes me increasing concern because of the nature of the proceedings.

Ninety two deaths were investigated and ten of these have gone forward to Inquest seven of them pursuant to leave of the Secretary of State under section 15 (1) Coroners Act 1988.

Having undertaken the preliminary work and conducted the first Pre-inquest hearing last August it is quite apparent that Inquests are not going to provide any of the families with the answers that they require. The remit of these Inquests means that the matters of public policy with which the families are concerned cannot be addressed and taking forward ten cases to inquest means that the remaining eighty two cases that were investigated remain without answers.

I do not believe that the investigation should proceed on a case by case basis but that the operation of Gosport War Memorial Hospital and its medical provision and supervision should be the subject of full Public Enquiry to address the concerns of all those who had family who received care at Gosport War Memorial Hospital between 1996 and 2000 can have confidence in the quality of health care provided.

I know that submissions were made on this issue by Mr Horsley but I would ask for re-consideration at this stage.

In short:-

1. There are ninety two families who have issues relating to Gosport.
2. Ten of those families have been selected to go forward for Inquest.
3. The Inquest is unlikely to address the issues the families have.
4. The scope of the Inquests will not address the overall provision of health care for the elderly at Gosport.
5. A public enquiry would allow a full and thorough investigation as a result of which families can maintain confidence in the system for the provision of health care and for death certification.

I am ready to spend eight weeks conducting these ten inquests and I have a further Pre-inquest hearing listed for 19th January. However I am going to spend that time achieving something that the families don't want to achieve and the representations received make that quite clear. May I ask for re-consideration of the decision not on the basis of the size of the operation but on the basis of the issues to be addressed.

Yours sincerely.

A M Bradley
H M Coroner