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CONFIDENTIAL

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Dr Catriona McColl
The Medical Defence Union Limited
3 Devonshire Place
London W1N 2EA

Dear McColl,

External Star: review at Gosport

Following a telephone call to Dr Cheshire today, I now send you a copy of the proposal for a review of deaths at Gosport Memorial Hospital requested by the Chief Medical Officer, and confirmation that the review should be undertaken.

My concern is access to data (essentially death certificates) although other records may require review, depending on the initial findings. I need to speak to the Chair of the relevant local research ethics committee, and in view of the sensitive nature of the review, it is essential I am fully aware of the issues that should be taken into account. My preference would be for following the guidance in paragraphs 18-20 of the GMC's booklet *Confidentiality: Protecting and Providing Information*, with the hope that the Chair would be able to confirm that a full application to the ethics committee would not be necessary. In addition to prolonging the process of obtaining approval, submission to the full committee might lead to difficulties since I understand there are local anxieties about investigations into the case that have been undertaken or are still in progress.

You should be aware that approval will also be required centrally for access to HES data. In collaboration with my colleague Peter Goldblatt at the Office for National Statistics, I am investigating the procedure for something described as

Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act. Unfortunately I have not yet received details about this.

The advice on this issue may be relatively straightforward, but in view of the matter being investigated in the review, it is important to avoid any mishaps. No doubt as this review proceeds, other issues will arise that will need your advice, but I hope it is possible to make a quick start.

Yours sincerely

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Professor Richard Baker