



PRESS RELEASE

5TH May 2009 – for immediate release

**PRESSURE MOUNTS FOR PUBLIC INQUIRIES INTO STAFFORD AND
GOSPORT HOSPITAL SCANDALS**

Health Secretary Alan Johnson today faces mounting pressure for a public inquiry to be held into the scandal at Stafford Hospital and also into Gosport War Memorial Hospital. A public meeting held by local campaign group *Cure the NHS* in Stafford tonight will be told that the investigations commissioned so far by Alan Johnson are 'piecemeal' and lack independence. The meeting will hear from Julie Bailey, founder of *Cure the NHS*; local MPs Bill Cash and Tony Wright who are amongst over 150 MPs from all parties who have formally called for a full public inquiry; and from Peter Walsh, chief executive of Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA – the charity for patient safety & justice) which is working with *Cure the NHS* to secure a public inquiry and also to ensure that individual patients and families who have been affected get the appropriate advice and support. Alan Johnson also faces potential legal action over his refusal to hold a public inquiry. Members of *Cure the NHS* are considering applying for a Judicial Review. If permission for a judicial review is granted by the High Court, the issue will continue to dog the Health Secretary into the next general election campaign.

Meanwhile, AvMA has asked Alan Johnson's parliamentary under secretary of state Ann Keen to keep her promise to review an earlier decision not to hold a public inquiry into the reasons for over prescribing of powerful drugs and suspicious deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital, following the finding of recent inquests of diamorphine having contributed to 50% of the deaths looked at so far. It has recently been revealed that the Coroner, the Police, and the County Council had all tried to persuade the Department of Health to call a public inquiry previously, but to no avail.

AvMA chief executive Peter Walsh said:

"There seems to be a worrying trend in the Department of Health to refuse to hold genuinely independent and robust inquiries into serious health scandals. If the events at Stafford and Gosport do not merit public inquiries, one has to question what would need to happen to persuade the current regime that a public inquiry is warranted"

ENDS

Notes:

- 1 For further information contact Peter Walsh on 0208 688 9555 or Code A
- 2 The Meeting is open to the media. Start 7pm. Venue: County Building, Martin Street
- 3 AvMA is a registered charity no. 299123 and a limited company registered in England No 2239250 and in Scotland SCO39683. Website: www.avma.org.uk