

Gosport investigation Notes for the liaison officer

Introduction

1. This notes describes what is required of you in your role as liaison officer for the Commission for Health Improvement's (CHI's) investigation in Gosport. Once a decision has been taken by the Secretary of State that CHI should undertake an investigation, and the terms of reference are agreed, the part of the NHS under investigation, is asked to nominate a liaison officer to act as the principal point of contact with CHI's Investigation Manager.

2. The liaison officer has a crucial part to play in the smooth running of the investigation. His/her role is to assist the Investigation Manager by providing the information needed and making arrangements for interviews with the relevant personnel from the organisation(s) involved in the investigation.

3. The responsibilities of the liaison officer can include the following:

- Supplying the documentary evidence requested
- Contacting interviewees and scheduling the interviews for the investigating team
- Making practical arrangements for the investigating team's visit
- Providing additional information for the Investigation Manager/investigating team
- Assisting with factual accuracy checks of the report

Assisting with documentary evidence

4. When the organisation is informed that the investigation is to take place, they are asked to make sure that all relevant documents and information requested by the Investigation Manager is forwarded to CHI. The timescale for producing these documents is usually very tight as investigations are normally undertaken within a short period. Under normal circumstances the investigation should conclude within 24 weeks from the onset of the investigation.

5. During the course of the investigation the CHI Investigation Manager may identify other documents, which need to be seen, and which were not requested at the onset.

Scheduling the interviews for the investigating team

6. From the documents and information provided, the Investigation Manager and the investigating team will decide which members of staff should be interviewed. The liaison officer may also be asked to assist in identifying others who should meet the team. The liaison officer will be asked to schedule the interviews within a framework identified by the investigation manager.

7. In some instances, staff will have left the employ of the organisation being investigated, and the liaison officer will be asked to provide a forwarding address for them. The liaison officer will not be asked to contact any of these interviewees.

8. CHI has the power to require NHS staff (including those working in general practice) to attend interviews but would rather meet people on a voluntary basis and consult them about what can be learned for the future. Interviewees will not be asked about any allegations of potential negligence or individual conduct during the course of events that triggered the investigation. Thus they should not feel their personal position is jeopardised by meeting CHI. Our starting point is to look at systems to support the provision of high quality patient care.

Making practical arrangements for the CHI investigating team's visit

9. Once the Investigation Manager and investigating team have had a chance to look at the documents provided by the organisation, the Investigation Manager will discuss with the liaison officer the list of people to be interviewed. The liaison officer will then be asked to schedule the interviews within the framework provided.

10. The liaison officer should ensure that all the interviewees are aware of the investigation, confirm interview arrangements in writing and provide them with a copy of the *Notes for Interviewees* and the *Terms of Reference*.

11. The investigating team will need rooms to be available for uninterrupted use by the investigating team where conversations cannot be overheard. The Investigation Manager will also need access to a telephone, a fax and a

photocopier, and the name of a member of staff who can help with any problems which may occur, for example, an interviewee failing to appear, or interviews running over time. The liaison officer should let the Investigation Manager know as soon as possible if arrangements need to be altered or if a member of staff cannot be traced.

12. Catering arrangements (during office hours) also need to be organised for the investigating team in discussion with the Investigation Manager.

Providing additional information for the investigation manager/investigating team

13. During the course of the investigation and when preparing the investigation report, the Investigation Manager may have additional queries which the liaison officer will be asked either to answer or to suggest an appropriate member of the organisation who could do so.

Assessing with factual accuracy checks of the report

14. The liaison officer may, when the draft report is being checked for factual accuracy, be asked to assist with the arrangements for checking parts of the report with interviewees. The Investigation Manager will contact the liaison officer to make arrangements where this is necessary.

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