

HEALTH: Relatives of those who died at hospital come forward

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Families call for new ward deaths probe

by Richard Whitehouse
The News

TEN more families have asked police and health officials to look into the deaths of their relatives at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

Police and health chiefs are already investigating the complaints of 13 families about the care and treatment their loved ones received before they died.

Many of the cases concern the administration of sedative drugs, such as diamorphine.

Now more families have come forward after a document dating from 1991 was uncovered by the health authority about prescribing practices at the hospital.

The health authority set up an information line for anyone with any concerns and 10 families contacted it and have had their details passed onto the police.

A police spokeswoman said: 'After the last announcements about the report the health authority set up an information line through NHS Direct.

Ten relatives contacted the line and expressed concerns about deaths at the hospital.

INQUIRIES

■ Investigations into deaths of patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital sparked in 1998 after Gillian Mackenzie raised concerns about the death of her mother Gladys Richards.

■ Police sent information on Mrs Richard's death, together with that concerning a dozen other patients, to the Crown Prosecution Service which said it did not contain enough evidence to convict anyone.

■ A report published by health watchdog the Commission for Health Improvement criticised the use of powerful drugs at the hospital.

■ Professor Richard Baker, who worked on the Harold Shipman case, is now conducting a death audit.

■ An internal management document, which raised concerns about the use of drugs in 1991, handed to police.

'That information has been passed on to the health authority and also on to us. We have written to them all and have said that we will be in touch shortly.'

Other relatives have previously complained about the action taken by police in investigating their cases.

Police have recently sent a file on some of the other cases to the Crown Prosecution Service.

This includes a report published by the Commission for Health Improvement, independent medical reports on five of the people who died at the hospital and a report by Chief

Superintendent Dan Clacher into formal complaints made against the police.

When a previous file was sent to the CPS it was returned and police were told there was not enough evidence for a prosecution.

One of the relatives, Gillian Mackenzie, whose mother Gladys Richards died in 1998, has now written to the prime minister asking him to look into the actions of the police.

She received a reply which said her letter had been passed to the Home Office which said it would be kept on file and her comments noted.

Con artists crackdown intensifies

ANTI-CRIME officials in Portsmouth today vowed to clamp down on doorstep con artists after a national survey showed bogus callers targeted 16 times as many people than previously thought.

The poll showed there were almost 100,000 older people targeted in the

south-east last year - a third of the national total.

Bogus callers raided the homes of three pensioners in one day in Portsmouth last week. Ian Freeston, a crime reduction officer at Fratton police station, said: 'It's a hideous crime.'

David Caddick, of Portsmouth social services,

said: 'There are lots of practical responses which we will continue to develop.' Help the Aged senior safety manager Lysa Ralph said: 'We need to prevent these despicable criminals who target the most vulnerable people in our society from getting away with it.'

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