

News Release

3 July 2002

CHI report into Gosport War Memorial Hospital published

The standards of care now available at Gosport War Memorial Hospital have been given a clean bill of health by the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) following a major review of services by the Government's NHS watchdog.

However, the investigation team made a number of serious criticisms about prescribing practices and management arrangements at the hospital during the late 1990s. The report acknowledged the significant improvements which have been made since then and makes a number of additional recommendations to further improve services.

The investigation followed a number of complaints by the families of patients about standards of care provided for frail elderly people dating back to 1998. The complaints were also investigated by the Police, who decided in February this year not to proceed further with their enquiries.

CHI concluded that, at the time of the deaths, a number of factors prevented the Trust from ensuring good standards of care. They found that prescribing policies were insufficient to govern the use of powerful pain relieving drugs, that a lack of data meant that high levels of prescribing could not be challenged, supervision systems were inadequate and that assessment procedures were not sufficiently thorough.

It stressed that the hospital now had adequate policies and guidelines in place governing drug prescribing and the supervision of clinical staff. It also said it had no significant concerns about the standards of nursing care provided at the hospital now.

Ian Piper, Chief Executive of Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust, welcomed the report saying that it represented one of the most thorough examinations of any community hospital in the country and that services were now of a standard that should reassure the people of Gosport.

"As a new organisation, we welcome and accept fully the findings of the report and are pleased that CHI recognised the improvements which have been made in services since the complaints it investigated were made," Ian Piper said.

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“CHI has made a number of recommendations to further improve services and these will be implemented in full. Indeed, we have already anticipated many of them and started work to introduce changes.”

Ian Piper stressed that the complaints and the subsequent CHI investigation had, at all stages, been taken very seriously by the former Portsmouth HealthCare NHS Trust, and said that Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust would ensure that lessons learned will not be lost.

“The last few years must have been a period of great anxiety for the families and staff concerned and we remain committed to working with them to further strengthen and improve the services provided at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

“It is important for the people of Gosport to have confidence in the services provided at the War Memorial Hospital and we believe that the CHI report gives them this reassurance.”

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Note to editors:

- The Commission for Health Improvement is an independent national body covering England and Wales, which supports and oversees the quality of clinical governance in NHS services.
- CHI launched its investigation in October last year, examining the management, provision and the quality of some aspects of health care at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.
- The decision to investigate came from concerns expressed about the use of some medicines, particularly analgesia and levels of sedation, and the culture in which care was provided at the hospital. It also considered responsibility for clinical care and transfer arrangements for patients.
- It did not reinvestigate individual complaints or the actions of specific members of staff.
- Fareham and Gosport and East Hampshire Primary Care Trusts took over responsibility for services for elderly frail people provided at Gosport War Memorial Hospital on April 1st this year. These were previously provided by the former Portsmouth HealthCare NHS Trust.
- A full copy of the report is available from the website of the Commission of Health Improvement <www.chi.nhs.uk>.
- Gosport War Memorial Hospital is a 108-bed purpose built community hospital serving around 90,000 people locally. It provides a full of range of outpatient services and clinics. It is predominantly concerned with services for older people.

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Code A

BRIEF FOR NEWS CONFERENCE. JULY 3RD 2002

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to Gosport and to the Salvation Army Hall. Thank you very much for coming to this news conference today.

My name is Lucy Docherty and I am the Chairman of Fareham & Gosport PCT. We are here to discuss the findings of the CHI investigation into services at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. However, before I go any further, let me just make a number of domestic announcements:

Fire exits,
Loos,
Refreshments.

Introductions: Mr Ian Piper, Chief Executive of the Trust, Dr Ian Reid, Medical Director, who are sitting with me.

At the end of 2001, following concerns raised by members of the public in respect of the care of some patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital, the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) was invited by the then Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and South East Hants Health Authority to conduct a thorough, independent, investigation at the hospital. CHI was asked to look at the issues underlying the complaints, and previous investigations, with the aim of reviewing current practice to ensure that the hospital is providing safe, good quality care for patients today. The report has been published this morning. The purpose of this media briefing is to discuss the report and its conclusions with the press.

We have arranged facilities for any relatives who are here today and wish to speak direct to the media or ourselves after the media briefing is over. There will also be the opportunity for individual interviews. Please let Code A know after the questions who you would like to interview but can I stress that this next half hour is for questions from the media.

I will now hand over to Ian Piper who will summarise the content of the report and outline the recommendations and next steps.

There will then be an opportunity for the press to ask questions of the panel.

The press conference will end in 30 mins time at 11.30 am.