

Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Strategic Health Authority



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Mrs M Bullbeck

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7 April 2003

Dear Mrs Bullbeck

Gosport War Memorial Hospital

I am writing in response to your letter of 6 March 2003 regarding Gosport War Memorial Hospital and Mr Ian Piper, Chief Executive of Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust.

May I start by apologising that you suffered distress as a consequence of the decision of the local NHS that Mr Piper should resume his normal role. A prime concern of the Strategic Health Authority is to ensure that, where possible, you are informed of key developments around Gosport War Memorial Hospital in a timely fashion and preferably before they are reported in the media. However, this is not always possible in this complex and changing issue. I would also like to apologise that it has taken some time to respond fully to you.

You raise two other key issues in your letter, namely: your concern that Mr Piper was involved in the management of Gosport War Memorial Hospital between 1991 and 2002, and the decision of the NHS to initiate an internal investigation in parallel with the Police's investigation. With regard to your concerns about Mr Piper, complaints or concerns expressed about an individual in the NHS need to be considered in the first instance by the organisation that employs them – in this instance Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust. Given that your complaint is against the Chief Executive, I have forwarded your letter, in confidence, to the organisation's Chair, Mrs Lucy Docherty, to consider and respond directly to you. I will say, however, that Mr Piper was not 'lying' when he stated that he was 'completely cold' to his new position, in that he had neither been employed as a Primary Care Trust Chief executive before his appointment to Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust, nor had he had direct operational responsibility for services provided at Gosport War Memorial Hospital at any time before 2001.

The second issue you raise is the NHS' decision to commission an internal investigation into inpatient care and treatment in the past at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. The decision to commission an NHS investigation was taken in September 2002, following discussion with Hampshire Constabulary. It was only in February 2003, when the Police investigation had progressed, that it became clear that continuation of the NHS investigation could potentially compromise the police's work. At that point, and with full discussion with the Police, the Strategic Health Authority decided to suspend its investigation.

Chair: Peter Bingham
Chief Executive: Gareth Cruddace

I hope that this letter has answered some of your concerns. May I take this opportunity to apologise once again for any distress the announcement about Gosport War Memorial Hospital may have caused.

Yours sincerely

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Gareth Cruddace
Chief Executive

cc Lucy Docherty, Chair of Fareham and Gosport PCT