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Bishop vows to keep families at centre of probe

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Investigation will look for answers over deaths at Gosport hospital

THE retired bishop leading an investigation into high death rates at a hospital has said families will be involved throughout the process.

Bishop James Jones is chairman of the independent panel looking into deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital between the 1980s and early 2000s.

One of the main points it will examine is if there was an overuse of opiates for elderly people, which may have led to their deaths.

There is no time limit to how long the investigation will go on for, but may take up to three years.

Bishop James led the

by **PRIYA MISTRY**

Health reporter
priya.mistry@thenews.co.uk

Hillsborough Independent Panel, which looked into the tragedy in which 96 fans lost their lives.

He said: 'I met with families whose loved ones were at the hospital during that period earlier this year.

'The process in the Hillsborough investigation was explained and the families said they would like a similar process.

'Since then we have been in contact with them.

'We believe this is important and the families helped

to form the terms of reference for the panel.

'We believe this is best instead of imposing anything on to them.

'Clearly they want to know about how their loved ones were treated and we are taking these concerns seriously.

'We seek the maximum information, will disclose the documents and, once they have been analysed by our experts on the panel, we will understand what happened.

'We will then write a report and this will be available to the families and the public so they can have a better understanding of what happened.'

The former bishop of Liverpool said the investigation will be a 'document interrogation' and organisations involved have been asked not to destroy any paperwork or records relating to that time.

Other members on the panel are geriatric medicine specialist Dr Colin Currie, investigative journalist David Hencke, former Scotland Yard Commander Duncan Jarrett and pathology and medical records expert Dr Bill Kirkup.

The bishop is also encouraging families who feel they are also affected, but haven't done so already to come forward. Visit gosportpanel.independent.gov.uk