

Fareham and Gosport

Primary Care Trust

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Ref IP/jkf/L 5 8

Code A

5 August 2002

Dear **Code A**

Thank you for your letter to me dated July 17, which I received on July 30.

The last few years have been extremely distressing for all the families who have raised concerns regarding the care provided at Gosport Hospital in the late 1990's. This is one of the key messages I tried to get across at the Chi press briefing and at the meetings I have had with families over the last few months.

I am sorry to hear that you feel my actions at the Chi press conference were unacceptable. The publication of the Chi report has been taken extremely seriously by the Primary Care Trust and all PCT staff who attended the media briefing were very aware of this and there was no intention to cause upset or hurt to the families. I know that any member of staff who attended the briefing would be devastated if they believed they caused you further distress. I apologise for any unintentional upset, which has been caused to you or your family.

Given the open way in which the PCT has tried to manage the Chi report it was very important that all the families were invited to the Chi media briefing so that if you wanted to you were able to speak first hand to the media and to us about the Report. I am sorry if the impression was given that we would be able to answer specific questions concerning individual cases in public. I believe that it would have been inappropriate and in breach of patient confidentiality to do this but understand your frustration if you believed that this was the offer made. Following the briefing **Code A**, **Code A** and I did speak to almost all of the families on a one-to-one basis.

I have always been honest in my communications with the media and the families. In relation to the Police investigations and the decision of the Crown Prosecution Service the words I used at the media briefing that, "The CPS has consistently advised that there are no grounds for prosecution" were taken from the police media statement issued on July 3rd, a copy of which is enclosed.

I am aware that many of the families have made formal complaints against the police regarding their investigation and I, like you, await the outcome of these complaints. I believe it would be inappropriate for the Primary Care Trust to take any action until the Police investigation of the complaints is completed. I understand from recent media reports that this will be in the next few weeks.

You are correct in saying that individual clinicians are accountable for their actions in line with their professional code of conduct and that the Trust's overriding concern is patient safety and the current clinical practice of clinicians. As you are aware the professional bodies for doctors

and nurses are reviewing individual cases and the outcomes of these are awaited. The PCT will then take any further necessary action.

Following your meeting with [Code A] at the media conference, where your request for an independent review of your grandmothers medical notes was agreed, I have been informed that your mother was telephoned soon after by [Code A] PCT Complaints Manager to discuss how best to arrange this. The doctor who will undertake this review has been away on leave for most of July but has recently returned and [Code A] will be in contact with your mother again to arrange for the meeting to take place at a convenient time and place for your family. Hopefully this review will help answer some of your questions.

One of the lessons we have learnt has been the need to offer families an early review of medical notes so that families have an opportunity to ask questions and get answers at an early stage.

Since my appointment as Chief Executive of Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust in April 2002 I have been working to support patients, carers and staff in as open a way as I can, ensuring that lessons are learned and that care is continuously improved. This is not always an easy task, or one I can get right to everyone's satisfaction, but one I try my hardest to achieve.

Thank you again for your letter and if there is anything else you would like to discuss with me then please contact me.

Code A

Ian Piper
Chief Executive

Enc

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Yours sincerely

Ian Piper
Chief Executive

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17th July 2002

amud on 29/7



Dear Mr Piper

I am writing to you now in response to the publication of the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) report in relation to the Gosport War Memorial Hospital and some of the issues it has raised.

Firstly, your actions at the press conference were unacceptable to say the least. To stand up and leave the room because you were too coward to answer our questions was an appalling piece of Public Relations. We were all led to believe that we would finally be given the opportunity to ask our questions publicly but unfortunately that wasn't meant to be. Instead you walked away from us with your heads bowed and a guilty look on your faces because you know just how wrong your were. For all this time the trust had denied the existence of any problem at the hospital and now it is there for you in black and white. I would also like to add that the behaviour of your personnel manager during the press conference was wholly inappropriate. The lady concerned sat with a smug grin on her face throughout the proceedings although I personally fail to see what could have been so funny. It was both upsetting and hurtful for the families concerned. I can also imagine that some members of staff may also have felt uncomfortable if they had seen their personnel manager grinning and laughing over such a serious matter.

The Fareham and Gosport PCT state that they accept the CHI report in its entirety which means that you accept the tragic events which took place at the hospital. You accept that excessive levels of drugs were given, you accept that inappropriate combinations of drugs were given, you accept anticipatory prescribing was taking place and you accept that palliative care guidelines were being inappropriately applied to rehabilitation patients. Yet after accepting all this what actions are you taking? NONE!! That's the real answer. You are hiding behind a flimsy shield, defending the hospital by arguing that your procedures have now changed. But that is NOT good enough. Whilst I applaud the fact that new procedures are now in place, I find it incredulous that despite everything noted in the CHI report, which I repeat you have accepted in its entirety, you still appear unwilling to take positive action against those responsible. The trust has relied on a woefully inadequate police investigation as an excuse not to take things any further. Let me point out a few things to you now Mr Piper.

I note you commented to the press that a thorough investigation was carried out by the police who felt that no individual should be held accountable. This was misleading and the CPS itself only ever looked at ONE case and claimed "insufficient evidence" which is very different from the "no evidence" you continually keep using as an excuse not to take action yourselves. If the police had investigated all of the allegations made to them then I am certain that they would find enough evidence to support our allegations. I find it horrifying that despite knowing the serious concerns many families have regarding the police investigation you can still justify using this as a basis for making decisions which

have such serious consequences. I myself remember telling you that a number of formal complaints were being lodged against the police, so how can you justify your decision?

During the press conference and your subsequent interview with the BBC you said that the trust had assessed whether the individuals were safe to practice. This may be the case now that your procedures have changed, but indicates that there was some query or grounds for concern as to the safety to practice in the past. How would you sleep at night if the doctor concerned in every single case left the War Memorial to work in another 'cottage' hospital whose procedures are yet to change? This would mean that the doctor would once again be in a position to commit wicked acts. You have chosen to blame a systems failure for the problems which have been noted in CHI's report and which families have been pointing out to you for years. However, systems are put in place by people and individuals are responsible for them. Systems can also be abused by people. The trust IS clearly at fault for failing to put systems in place to prevent an individual committing acts which I believe led to the death of innocent people, or to identify when an individual doctor was doing something wrong. BUT the fact remains that an individual doctor with many years of training and experience 'chose' to administer those drugs to elderly people. The doctor would have known that the levels of drugs being prescribed was excessive and inappropriate, yet still 'chose' to give them and as CHI has acknowledged put peoples' lives at risk. I wholly believe that the administration of these drugs resulted in the death of innocent people. CHI may say they are unable to determine whether the drugs led to deaths but I point out that likewise this means they can't prove that they didn't. So yes your systems failed because they didn't exist, but the failure of systems simply means that a doctor who should know better was able to abuse their position, and I allege kill innocent people. Harold Shipman is serving fifteen life sentences for injecting his patients with the same drugs as in these cases, yet you hide behind a smoke screen, blaming systems and protecting individuals from acts of wrong doing.

The standard of care at that hospital was seriously lacking and substandard. How can you justify this? It was abuse of patients which left them helpless and stripped of all dignity. To make matters worse their right to life was also taken away from them. My grandmother was treated worse than an animal in the care of the staff at the Gosport War Memorial and I believe that her mistreatment also contributed to her premature death. The state of her medical file leaves a lot to be desired and raised serious concerns about the capability of fully trained 'professional' staff. I am interested as to why we have never been offered the opportunity to discuss our medical file with an 'independent' consultant, although I wonder how independent. [Code A] told us that this service was available to us had we asked for it but we were never made aware. [Code A] tried to suggest that this may be because we had never complained to or contacted the trust as we went straight to the police. As I pointed out to [Code A], we have spoken to [Code A] and [Code A] in the past, and I myself have a very long conversation with you over the phone just a few weeks ago. I made it clear to you then Mr Piper that we had contacted the police first as our concerns were so serious. However, I am interested to know why you didn't suggest this service to me before? Another oversight and apology according to [Code A] who can't understand what happened. How disappointing.

Apologising to us but saying you do not need to do anything else is wrong and goes against all morals and ethics. By all means put things right for the future to prevent other

people suffering the same fate as my grandmother, but what about those people who have already suffered? I tell you now Mr Piper, the trust continually denied a problem at that hospital and if it had not been for families continuing to fight despite being knocked back time and again then CHI would never have been brought in and procedures probably not changed and people would continue to die unnecessarily. However, CHI does exist and does acknowledge what was happening at the hospital. CHI is apologising to us and start taking some positive action and accept that people should be held accountable for their actions. Every individual is responsible for his or her own actions and it is time that the trust admitted this and took action.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Code A

Ann Spille
to parents

MEDIA SERVICES

GOSPORT WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL POLICE WELCOME REPORT

Hampshire Constabulary welcomes the Commission for Health Improvement's report, which has concentrated on the policies and procedures at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

The police investigation was carried out to identify and focus on any potential criminal activity. The Crown Prosecution Service has consistently advised that there are no grounds for prosecution.

The Commission's report hopefully reassures concerned relatives that this matter has been examined, and key recommendations made.

The constabulary continues to actively review this complex investigation, in the context of complaints against police made by relatives and will act accordingly on any findings from that process.

This case concentrates on issues of major significance, and has potential ramifications for many agencies.

It must be seen against the backdrop of care for the elderly being provided with transparency and accountability to best health practice and the law.

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Code A

Celebrations galore mark 75th birthday of diocese

by Emily Twinch
The News

THOUSANDS are expected to the second big celebration to mark the 75th birthday of the Diocese of Portsmouth.

Churchgoers are expected to flock to Castle Field, Southsea, on Sunday for the holy communion service at noon.

There will then be carnival processions, music from a massed choir and orchestra and drama using puppets from the Notting Hill Carnival.

At 9am the Anglican Bishop of Portsmouth, the Rt Rev Kenneth Stevenson, will meet worshippers from the Isle of Wight at the gates to Ryde Pier.

He will join them on a specially-commissioned ferry at 10am, with the Unity Stompers jazz band playing during the crossing.

Churchgoers from Gosport will take the 10am ferry and those from the mainland will gather at Portsmouth Cathedral.

There will then be a children's fun fair, charity stalls, morris and clog dancers, a steel band and dog displays and beer, provided by Gales Brewery.

The day will end at 3.30pm with a service led by the Unity Stompers.

Anyone from the Isle of Wight who would like to order ferry tickets should contact the Rev Mike Exell on 11983 522095.

HEALTH: Counselling offered to staff but not relatives in hospital probe

Fury over lack of care for bereaved

by Steve Bone
The News

HEALTH bosses under fire over a critical report on a Gosport hospital faced new anger today – for offering counselling to staff but not to relatives.

Families of elderly patients who died at the War Memorial were angered when they read in the Commission for Health Improvement's report that health trust managers had encouraged nurses and doctors to get counselling.

Some staff who had been stressed by the investigations into a series of deaths at the hospital even complained they had not been given enough support.

But relatives were asking today: 'Where was the support for us?'

Emily Yeats, 26, whose grandmother Alice Wilkie, 82, was one of those who died after going to the hospital for rehabilitation, said: 'What have they offered us? They haven't offered us anything. They've thought to offer the staff counselling but they've left us to it.'

Marjorie Bulbeck, 59, of Southbourne near Emsworth,

Watchdog has no remit to look into individual cases

THE WATCHDOG that studied the hospital in the light of the series of complaint has answered criticism over its admission that it was unable to confirm whether too-high drug doses resulted in any

deaths. Commission for Health Improvement spokeswoman Alison Iliff said its remit in this or any investigation it carried out was not to look into individual cases.

Instead its role was to look at whether systems at the hospital failed to ensure good patient care. She said it was for other agencies – including police and health officials – to look into individual cases.



From the left is Emily Yeats, 26, her late grandmother Alice Wilkie, 82, Marjorie Bulbeck, and her late mother Dulcie Middleton who died aged 85

whose mother Dulcie Middleton, 85, died in the hospital last September, agreed access to an 'independent ear' might have helped.

'We have had to push for responses from the health people and to hear they seem to have done more for the staff than us is disappointing.'

The fresh criticism of bosses of the now-defunct Portsmouth Healthcare NHS Trust, which ran the community hospital at the time of the

deaths, comes at the end of a week health chiefs will want to forget. The CHI report acknowledged the hospital now had good procedures in place but raised serious concerns over elderly care there in the late 1990s – particularly over drugs being given to rehab patients unchecked.

Ian Piper, chief executive of the Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust which now runs the hospital, said staff would have had access to

counsellors in line with permanent arrangements for NHS staff across the area.

But he said he did not feel it appropriate the issue of counselling for those with complaints against the NHS should be initiated by the trust, as some people might take it the wrong way.

He added: 'If any family raised it with us, we would certainly do everything we could to ensure they had access to counselling.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

MP wants halt to 'school masts'

HAMPSHIRE: The Liberal Democrat MP for Portsmouth South has urged the government to stop building mobile phone masts on or near schools.

Mike Hancock has also called for local government planning guidance to be re-drawn so authorities can reject applications on the grounds of public health.

He said: 'Local authorities must be supported in their moves to curb the amount of masts being put up near those most vulnerable. Children deserve to be protected from the possible threat masts pose.'

Fridges recycled

WEST SUSSEX: 6,000 discarded fridges have been recycled after council bosses brought in a German machine to scrap the appliances.

West Sussex County Council hired a portable recycling unit to tackle the problem of fridges piling up as they waited to be stripped of CFCs in line with EU regulations.

A total of 9,000 abandoned fridges still need recycling.

Sports car design

HORNDEN: A former Horndean Community College pupil is among a team taking a life-size model of an innovative sports car to the prestigious New Designers Exhibition in London this