

*Lisa - Please file this*

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**Code A**

**MILLS**  
 &  
**REEVE**

Mr D C Horsley  
 HM Coroner for Portsmouth and South East  
 Hampshire  
 Coroner's Office  
 Room T20  
 The Guildhall,  
 Guildhall Square  
 Portsmouth  
 PO1 2AJ

29 May 2009



Dear Sir

**G R - Inquest**

We refer to your letter of 3 April.

We are grateful to you for indicating that you will treat Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust as an "interested party".

Trust was not responsible for the delivery of the relevant service at the time of Gladys Richard's death however they do now manage the division of medicine for older people within Portsmouth and would now be regarded as the successor service.

We are interested as to the grounds for the opening of this Inquest.

Perhaps you could confirm that you have obtained the authority of the Secretary of State to open this Inquest.

You will appreciate that usually the presence of a body within the jurisdiction is all too apparent, however our understanding is that, if there is no actual body, then the Coroner needs to make application to the Secretary of State for permission to hold an Inquest in the absence of a body. Normally the Coroner would not have discretion about holding an Inquest in the appropriate circumstances where it appears the death may be unnatural, but we do take the view that you do have discretion as to whether or not to apply to the Secretary of State for permission.

Whilst this firm and our client will do all possible to assist you in any way with your considerations in this matter and any inquiry, we are concerned that in this particular case there has been a considerable period of time since the death occurred.

Of course we are aware of the other Inquests which arose (presumably) out of similar facts.

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If you do have the permission of the Secretary of State perhaps you will be kind enough to indicate to us the methodology you intend to follow in this matter. Will you be holding a pre-inquest hearing? What evidence would you be intending to call and consider? Is it your intention to call expert evidence? Will you be calling witnesses from the Trust?

We look forward to hearing from you and if we can help in anyway then of course you should not hesitate to contact us. You may feel that a brief telephone discussion would assist the understanding of our respective positions and if so then do not hesitate to contact Stuart Knowles from this office at any time.

**Code A**

