

*Meeting on Mon. 29/9.***Skye Sue - Legal Services Manager**

From: Jacqueline Haines [Code A]
Sent: 18 September 2008 15:33
To: Skye Sue - Legal Services Manager
Subject: FW: Inquests

*18/9 Forwarded to PR.**JW.*

for info

From: Stuart Knowles
Sent: 18 September 2008 15:07
To: 'ursula.ward' [Code A]; 'peter.melloi' [Code A]
Cc: Jog Hundle; Jacqueline Haines
Subject: Inquests

Dear Ursula and Peter

I have been in discussions with Jacque Haines about the forthcoming inquests into the deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. I note that they have already received national media coverage.

I understand that a steering group has been set up which is being chaired by Richard Samuel from the PCT.

For your information, I attach a copy of a letter which Jill Mason has written to Mr Samuel, setting out the services that we can offer the NHS locally.

I believe that Jacque is trying to organise a time for me to come and discuss this matter with you. I am concerned to note that the inquests have been listed at the start of next year for some 4 to 6 weeks. It is clearly vital that the NHS gets to grips with the evidence in this matter and drives the process forward to ensure that the interest of the service as a whole is protected. It is my view that you will need to be confident that the process is being managed and irrespective of any "liability" for deaths which occurred some 10 years ago, the PR implications to the Trust cannot be underestimated.

I understand my colleague, Tim Winn, is investigating the issue of legal responsibility, which may of course have implications for you as far as the costs of the inquests are concerned.

I hope that we can get a meeting in our respective diaries and I would very much welcome the opportunity of coming down to see you.

In the meantime, if you have any questions you mustn't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Stuart Knowles
 Consultant
 for Mills & Reeve LLP

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18/09/2008

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Code A

MILLS
 &
REEVE

Mr R Samuel
 Director of Performance and Standards
 Hampshire Primary Care Trust
 Omega House
 112 Southampton Road
 Eastleigh, Hampshire
 SO50 5PB

18 September 2008

Dear Mr Samuel

Legal Services

As you might be aware, Mills & Reeve LLP act for Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust and our senior solicitor Jacqueline Haines, who has an office at the Trust, is employed by Mills & Reeve LLP.

I understand that she has been briefed by Sue Skye with regard to the forthcoming Inquest into the Gosport War Memorial Hospital deaths and that you are chairing the steering group established to manage this matter for the NHS locally.

In light of the fact that the Coroner has now listed the case for 4-6 weeks from 7 March 2009, it seems sensible for the Steering Group to take a view with regard to the appropriate legal representation.

I appreciate that each of the NHS bodies involved will have different legal advisers and I am aware that the steering group will be seeking to instruct one firm to represent all NHS parties at the Inquest.

I would like to propose that we perhaps join the next Steering Group meeting on 10th October to present to you briefly on how we might approach such an Inquest and what we see as the key issues. I anticipate you will want to know how we would protect your interests and manage the whole process, the inquiry and all the people involved. I am sure you appreciate that as the Coroner is holding pre-inquest hearings to deal with the preparatory steps and any Human Rights issues, it is vital that the steering group is confident that the issues and procedural matters are now driven forward in the best interests of the Service.

We think it would be important for you to meet those that we would be proposing to undertake the work. In particular, I would be recommending my colleague, Stuart Knowles, Consultant with the firm. Stuart, as well as being a qualified solicitor with some eighteen years NHS experience, is also an Assistant Coroner and I believe that this will provide you with the breadth and depth of experience that is required in these circumstances. Stuart has also worked in-house for the NHS, most recently at Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust where he worked regularly preparing NHS staff at all levels to handle the inquest process

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and all the ancillary matters that can go with high profile hearings. Finally, I can say that Stuart is also a trained BBC journalist and is well placed to assist you in handling hostile media situations and liaising with you and your PR advisers on press statements.

If you would like further information, then please do not hesitate to contact either myself (my contact details are set out above) or:

Stuart Knowles
Jacqueline Haines
Jog Hundle

Tel:

Tel:

Tel:

Code A

e-mail:

e-mail:

e-mail:

Code A

If I can provide any further information, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Jill Mason
Partner
for Mills & Reeve LLP

Please ring Mr. Knowles

Mills + Reeve

Re: G.W.M. Wignests

Code A