

From the Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson



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Professor Richard Baker
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Dear Professor Baker,

Thank you for your letter of 28 August 2003, enclosing correspondence from Ann Alexander.

I attach a suggested draft response to her letter, which you may wish to consider. I shall write again shortly, when I have received legal advice about the draft report you kindly provided under cover of your letter dated 3 July 2003.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Liam Donaldson'.

**SIR LIAM DONALDSON
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER**

DRAFT – Letter to Ann Alexander from Professor Baker

Dear Ann,

Thank you for your letter of 28 August 2003, about my work at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

I cannot yet give a date when the report will be finalised, although I hope that this can be soon. Some final checks are being carried out on the detail of the report, which I will then present to the Chief Medical Officer, as he commissioned my review.

It will, of course, be for the Department of Health to decide on the handling of the report, including the question of whether it should be made more widely available. I am sure that any decision about that must be guided by progress in the current police investigation.

While I would in principle be happy to meet you and the families involved, I think that it would be helpful to know in advance what you would want to achieve at such a meeting. As you will be aware, I was commissioned by the Chief Medical Officer to conduct a clinical audit to identify unusual trends or patterns that may raise serious concerns about the care of elderly patients at the hospital, to cover:

- (i) patterns of observed, compared to expected deaths in particular age groups, in the hospital and relevant general practice patients;
- (ii) deaths showing unusual clusters by place of death and time;
- (iii) certified cause of death in relation to medical history; and
- (iv) prescribing of opiates and related sedation.

You will, I am sure, understand that I will not be able to discuss any of my findings in advance of publication of the report (and that decision, as I have said, is for the Department of Health). I will also need to seek advice about any meeting and its timing so as not to prejudice the investigation being conducted by the police.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Professor Richard Baker