

# PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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## Inquest into the Death of Gillian Astbury to Begin Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2010

The inquest into the death of, Mrs Gillian Astbury, who died after falling into a diabetic coma at Stafford General Hospital, will begin on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2010. The law firm, Anthony Collins, have confirmed they will be representing the family.

The inquest will be one of the first surrounding the deaths at Stafford Hospital to be heard by a jury. A public inquiry into the catastrophic failings at the hospital was also announced earlier this summer.

Mrs Astbury, aged 66 from Hednesford, Staffordshire, was taken to Stafford General Hospital after a fall, where a fractured pelvis was diagnosed.

Gillian, a Grandmother, had been an insulin-dependent diabetic since 1989. Without regular insulin and careful monitoring of her diet, there was a risk that blood sugar levels could rise to a dangerous level which would ultimately result in a fatal coma.

In 2003 Gillian had suffered a stroke which left her with some confusion and memory problems. Since then she had been looked after by a friend and full time carer, Ron Street, and a district nurse who visited her at home twice a day to administer her insulin.

Because of Gillian's medical history a care plan to manage her diabetes was drawn up when she was first admitted to the hospital. Yet despite this plan, within days of being transferred to the Orthopaedics and Trauma Ward, Mrs Astbury was found in a fatal diabetic coma and clinical and nursing staff were unable to revive her.

The inquest, which starts on Monday, will take place at Stafford Coroner's Court. It will determine the facts surrounding Mrs Astbury's death, examining in detail key features of the case which have already given rise to serious questions about the systemic failings of Stafford General Hospital.

Sarah Huntbach from Anthony Collins commented: "It is appalling that Gillian Astbury, whose medical condition and diabetes was well documented, should die of fundamental oversights in her care. Gill's death could have been so easily avoided had basic standards and procedures been adhered to by the hospital.

"It is our belief that the alleged systematic failings that lie at the heart of this case are so great that they should be heard by a jury and not presented to the coroner alone."

Mr Ron Street, full time carer and friend of Mrs Astbury, commented: "It has been more than three years since Gill's death at Stafford Hospital, since then an astonishing and shocking number of equally needless and premature deaths have come to light, many of which were not properly investigated.

"At last a public inquiry is being prepared and we hope its progress and ultimate findings will be held to close scrutiny by members of the press and public. Gill's inquest pre-dates the inquiry by approximately a month and, like the inquiry, calls for the issues at Stafford hospital to be fully investigated in a public forum.

The years since Gill's death have taken their toll emotionally and our hope now is that the inquest will bring her a chance of justice."

Anthony Collins are also pursuing a civil action and a Human Rights Act claim on behalf of Mrs Astbury's Grandson.

- ENDS -

Further information is available from the Anthony Collins Solicitors Press Office.

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**Please see accompanying briefing notes for more information.**

### **Editor's Notes**

#### **Anthony Collins Solicitors**

Anthony Collins Solicitors is a full service law firm with a national reputation for advising individuals, businesses, not-for-profit organisations, local authorities, and public sector bodies throughout the UK. For nearly four decades, it has been successfully combining market-leading legal expertise with a commitment to excellence and long-term relationships underpinned by a strong ethical position.

Chambers UK, the leading guide to the legal industry, recently praised the firm across its broad range of practice areas, singling out an outstanding 20 leaders in their fields.

Its Clinical Negligence team has also been recognised by members of the legal profession. In particular, the Legal 500 and Chambers UK guides recommend Anthony Collins Solicitors as one of the leading law firms in clinical negligence in the West Midlands.

Sarah Huntbach, Associate Solicitor, is the lead solicitor acting on behalf of the Astbury family. Her profile is available at <http://www.anthonycollins.com/who-we-are/our-people.aspx>.