

By Gordon Blackstock

gblackstock@sundaypost.com

A SON who complained to police that doctors tried to kill his mum by putting her on the controversial Liverpool Care Pathway has accused justice chiefs of ignoring him.

Lothian and Borders Police investigated the care of Jean Tulloch, a patient who died at Edinburgh's Western General Hospital, almost a year ago.

A report on the 83-year-old's death was passed to the Crown Office in October.

Her son Peter, 55, asked police to investigate after claiming Jean's food and fluids were withdrawn without his agreement as part of the LCP.

The regime sees the medical withdrawal of lifesaving treatment, with the sick sedated and usually denied nutrition and fluids to ease them out of life.

Peter says the decision amounted to "attempted murder". But five months since police

This care pathway killed my mother

...AND NOW I'M BEING IGNORED

passed the Crown Office its dossier on the case, Peter's claims he's heard nothing.

He blasted: "It's as if they just want me to go away."

Jean Tulloch was taken to hospital after falling ill in her care home in Edinburgh a year ago today. Doctors diagnosed a urinary and chest infection. Her condition deteriorated and on March 14 her intravenous drip was withdrawn.

However, when Peter spotted this the following day he complained and a new drip was attached. It meant she'd been left without fluids or nutrition for 30 hours. Jean died 13 days later from end-stage dementia.

Peter, who now lives in

Bedfordshire, said: "She was never the same after they took out the drip. In my opinion it amounted to attempted murder to free a bed."

Five months after his mum's death, Peter received a response from NHS Lothian refusing to confirm whether his mum had been placed on the LCP.

Peter then complained to police.

Lothian and Borders police investigated and passed a file to the Procurator Fiscal but the Crown Office has yet to make a decision on whether they are to prosecute.

Peter added: "I've not had any word. My calls go unanswered or are not returned. Worse, I sent a recorded letter in January and they have not responded."

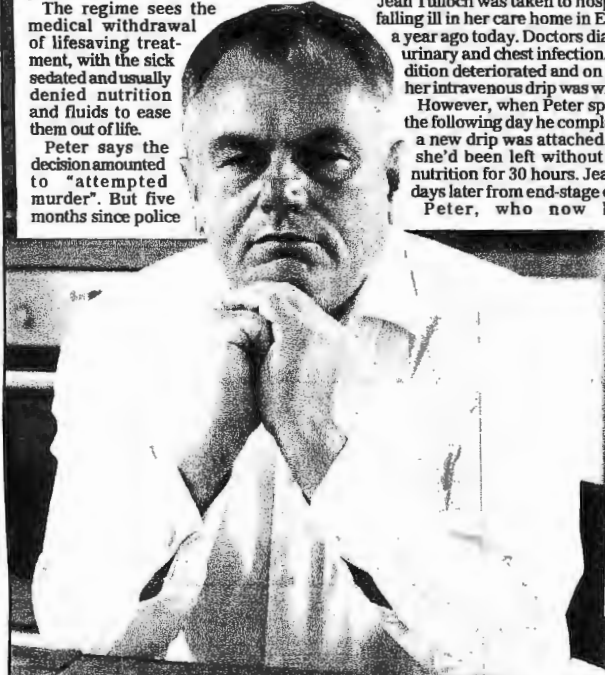
"I believe they have a statutory duty to respond to all requests like this within 20 days. Yet mine has been ignored."

Legal sources say the high-profile nature of the LCP means any potential prosecution would need to be treated carefully.

A spokesman for the Crown Office said: "The Procurator Fiscal can receive preliminary information, but that does not amount to the submission of an official report recommending further investigation."

"It would not be appropriate to comment on private correspondence."

Dr David Farquharson, medical director at NHS Lothian, said: "We are in the process of writing to Mr Tulloch again to invite him to meet with us."



■ Left, Peter Tulloch and, Inset, his mother Jean.

■ The Liverpool Care Pathway was developed in the city it is named after in the 1990s and is designed to ease the suffering of patients at the end of their lives.

In 2004 it was endorsed by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence to be implemented in all hospitals.

But its use in the last few years has become

controversial after a number of high-profile complaints about its use, including concerns that clinical decisions could be linked to financial incentives.

The extent of its use in Scotland is unclear. Health boards refused to give The Sunday Post figures as to how many Scots were put on the pathway last year — or the number of complaints about it.