

Bereavement – Policies and Practice Working Group Meeting

1 February 2016

NOTES OF THE MEETING

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Introductions were given and apologies were noted (details of attendance are presented at Annex 1).

The Chair outlined the purpose of the meeting was to:

- Discuss any community concerns regarding the release of deceased relatives from Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust;
- Ensure there was a better understanding and knowledge of the Trust's policy and procedures;
- Ensure that all partners and stakeholders were working together with shared aims and understanding; and,
- Identify any further improvements.

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Representatives from Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in attendance were invited to address the meeting. The main issues highlighted included:

- The Trust recognised that the importance of the issues associated with the timely release of bodies for the purpose of burial had not always been recognised across the Trust.
- As a result, the Trust also recognised there were improvements to be made in terms of consistently following an agreed process and procedure.
- The recently agreed *Care After Death and Bereavement Policy* provided a good foundation on which to make progress.
- The production of the policy document represented a significant milestone, as this was a new policy documents and had not previously been formulated.
- The new policy aimed to make the process:
 - More accessible for all stakeholders
 - Speedier and more streamlined
 - More consistently applied
- Staff communication would be a key aspect of the launch of the new policy, and a series of staff seminars and awareness raising was planned.
- There are specific legal requirements associated with issuing 'cause of death' certificates that must be complied with.

Local councillors and other stakeholders

The Chair invited local councillors and other stakeholders present to comment and outline any issues and/or matters of community concern. The main matters highlighted included:

- The timely release of deceased relatives should be considered to be a reasonable request.
- Difficulties were most evident when deaths occurred 'out of hours' and at weekends.
- There had been evidence and experience of inconstant practice within the Trust.
- The need for a completed 'cause of death' certificate to be provided and soon as possible following confirmation of the death.

- Difficulties associated with 'out of England' burials and repatriation issues: The involvement and cooperation of the coroner was essential.
- The opening hours of the bereavement office: The move from 10:00am to 8:30am opening was welcomed and seen as a positive improvement.
- Issues associated with the availability of 'out of hours' pathology and the costs of non-invasive post mortems – where post mortems were required.

Registrar's Office

The Chair invited specific discussion and comments in relation to the role of the Council's Registrar's Office. The main issues discussed included:

- The appointment of 3 community volunteers to assist with 'out of hours' working.
- Revised office opening hours and flexibility of appointments.
- The availability of further extended hours and details of the community volunteers.

All the issues highlighted were discussed in detail among the working group.

Conclusion

In summing-up the discussion, the Chair recognised and highlighted the following points:

- Some of the issues raised related to the Trust's historic practices and therefore the development of the Trust's formal policy was welcomed.
- It was clear that the Trust was in the early stages of implementing the new policy across the organisation; therefore it was currently difficult to fully assess the impact and associated level of progress.
- The incidence and scale of the matters considered were not clear: It would be useful to have some indication of the monthly/ annual number of d
- It was clear the Trust recognised the importance of training and culture-change needed to implement its new policy. However, it was not clear how the Trust could influence matters being incorporated into the general training of doctors; it was also unclear how the Trust would ensure the policy would be incorporated into the Trust's inductions for medics, as part of the general turnover during medical training and placements.
- It may be helpful for the Trust to develop some form of 'service standards' to help inform families of the level of service they can expect from the Trust.
- It was unclear if/ how processes for adults and children might differ, and why this might be case.
- The Trust should identify the average of cost of post mortems and consider off-setting this against the cost of non-invasive post mortems for all families who would prefer this as an option.
- The Trust, alongside the Council's Registrar's Office should consider jointly producing, and keeping under review, a family information leaflet to explain the process and provide key contact information.

While a follow-up meeting to review progress with the Trust would be beneficial, it was recognised that issues associated with the provision of death certificates 'out of hours' in the community was a matter for further discussion with local Clinical Commissioning Groups.

The Chair thanks all those in attendance for their contributions to the discussion and closed the meeting.

DETAILS OF ATTENDANCE

Scrutiny Board Members

- Councillor Peter Gruen – Chair
- Councillor Arif Hussain
- Councillor Ghulam Hussain

Local Councillors

- Councillor Javaid Akhtar
- Councillor Mohammed Iqbal
- Councillor Asghar Khan

Apologies were received from Councillor Kamila Maqsood and Councillor Mohammed Rafique

Local Funeral Directors / Other attendees

- Mr Mir
- Mr Hussain
- Mr Younsis
- Dr Khan
- Salma Arif (guest of Councillor Arif Hussain)

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

- Krystina Kozłowska (Head of Patient Experience)
- Shaun Preece (Lead Nurse Patient Experience & Involvement)
- Alun Pymer Deputy Patient, Carer and Public Involvement Manager

Leeds City Council Officers

- Penny Whitehead, Registration Services Manager
- Steven Courtney, Principal Scrutiny Adviser

Background documents provided in advance of the meeting

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Care After Death and Bereavement Policy (Adults): Specific reference Appendix K, pages 57-61) – approved January 2016