

**Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT)
Response to Leeds City Council Scrutiny Board and update on bereavement
services within LTHT**

In May 2016 a report was produced by the LCC Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Services, Public Health, NHS). This report listed a number of desired outcomes and recommendations for LTHT aimed at improving the experience of bereaved families seeking the timely release of deceased relatives for cultural reasons.

The LTHT response to each recommendation is set out below and this preface aims to update the Scrutiny Board on other on-going improvements affecting those who are bereaved following a death in hospital.

Access to bereavement support:

LTHT recognises the significant and long term impact that bereavement can have on families and although the Trust is not commissioned to provide on-going bereavement support it is recognised that this is an important area where there are opportunities for several organisations to work collaboratively and improve care. Significant improvements in this area recently include:

- The LTHT Bereavement Services team has developed closer links with the Leeds Bereavement Forum and other community organisations to improve signposting for the bereaved who are seeking support after death.
- Funding has been allocated within LTHT to enable the creation of a Clinical Nurse Specialist post for a bereavement worker to support families after the death of an adult and to develop education for employees within the Trust.
- Local charity 'Elliot's Footprint' has agreed to fund a post for a bereavement worker within Leeds Children's Hospital to support parents after death. The funding is initially for a two year period.

Improved information and communication

A common theme which relatives cite as being important following bereavement is having access to up to date and relevant information about what actions they need to take next. Relatives are also concerned at this difficult time about being able to have answers to questions about the care and treatment that was received by the deceased during their hospital admission. LTHT continues to make improvements in this area including:

- Developing a new external webpage which is in the process of being populated with practical information for relatives following the death of a loved one as well as information about how to access bereavement support. Links will be provided to the LCC bereavement services website and the Leeds Bereavement Forum.
- In partnership with the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), an information resource has been created to support families experiencing bereavement who wish to raise a concern about their relatives care whilst in hospital. This resource will be available in a number of different languages.

- An information resource is being created for those relatives who require timely release of a deceased relative for cultural reasons. The leaflet will set out the process which LTHT follows, the legal requirements and what the Trust and Coronial services can offer to support relatives. This resource will be available in a number of different languages and is anticipated to be completed February 2017.

General service improvements

- The Trust has worked with the Leeds City Council registrars recently to increase the number of appointments available at St James's University Hospital for registration of death. This means the medical certificate of cause of death can be collected and the death registered at one visit at one location. Having registrars co-located in the hospital with the Bereavement Services team is a resource that is extremely popular with bereaved relatives and something the Trust would be keen to further develop this through discussions with the Council.
- LTHT has entered into a contract with Co-op Funeralcare to provide funeral services, when responsibility for arranging a funeral following a death falls to the Trust. The contract, in place since July 2016, has resulted in improvements in quality and service. These improvements include greater choice with regards to location of funeral; greater opportunity for families to have direct input on the format of the funeral and accoutrements; and greater sensitivity in caring for neonates, babies, small children and stillbirths.
- The Bereavement Services team continues to provide training and updates to clinical groups of all levels around Care after Death and Bereavement. Training includes raising awareness of cultural needs and the importance of early release of the deceased for some families.
- The LTHT Bereavement Services team is planning to apply for charitable funding to make physical improvements to the public areas of the bereavement suite at St James's University Hospital.

The Trust recognises there are plans for national reforms to death certification and to introduce a Medical Examiner process. It is anticipated that these reforms will have a significant impact on the bereavement pathway, including bereaved relatives. The Trust responded to the recent Department of Health consultation on the topic and is in communication with Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, where a pilot has been held, to better understand what impacts the reforms may have. It is clear successful implementation will require close liaison between LCC and LTHT to ensure impact of staff and families is minimised as much as possible.

LTHT
December 2016