

24 October 2023

Dear Councillor

I am writing to inform you of an update to the mortuary service here at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. Over the past few years the Trust has been reporting to the Leeds Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board regarding the timely release of the bodies of deceased patients for ceremonial and burial purposes and for religious and cultural reasons. During this engagement, the Trust identified opportunities to improve the experience of bereaved families and next of kin by introducing new processes for the release of deceased patients.

Steps have been in place, which have been partially successful, and as part of our focus on continuous improvement, the process has been reviewed again.

Following a further period of discussion and engagement with key partners, the Trust is now providing a more streamlined service, which we anticipate will add further support for bereaved families, next of kin, funeral directors and religious leaders.

Why is a change needed?

This is an extremely sensitive area of care and we want to do all we can to ensure an appropriate and considerate service.

In recent months, competing pressures of site management and an outdated process has not facilitated an out of hours service. A more robust solution has now been developed.

New arrangements

From 2 October 2023, a new process for the out of hours release of deceased patients through our mortuary service has been put in place.

The new service will be delivered through our Anatomical Pathology Technicians, who are part of the Mortuary Team in the Trust's Pathology Service. This team has previously delivered the service during typical working hours, which will continue. This change expands the service provision into an 8am-8pm, seven days a week service, with an on-call model implemented from 4.30pm to 8pm Monday to Friday and during weekends and bank holidays, 8am-8pm.

This new way of working will simplify the lines of communication, enhancing efficiency, safety and the experience of bereaved loved ones. It will also assist our staff, reducing the number of changes between teams and ensuring quality and compliance is managed through one team. This new process is also more cost efficient.

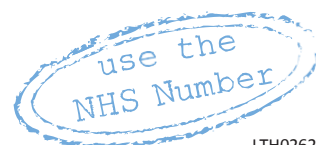
Contact points

Our point of contact for the out of hours service is the on-call Mortuary Team who can be contacted by Funeral Directors through our switchboards: St James's University Hospital 0113 243 3144 or Leeds General Infirmary 0113 243 2799.

Chair Dame Linda Pollard DBE DL Hon LLD **Chief Executive** Professor Phil Wood

The Leeds Teaching Hospitals incorporating:

Chapel Allerton Hospital Leeds Dental Institute Seacroft Hospital Leeds Children's Hospital
St James's University Hospital Leeds General Infirmary Wharfedale Hospital Leeds Cancer Centre



The success of the new process will be measured in several ways including engagement with our communities, community leaders, funeral directors and councillors. As we transition to the new process your ongoing feedback and engagement is critical, so we can implement improvements and changes in real-time. We will host several on-site events where we will be on hand to answer any questions pertaining to the new process and combine a visit to our mortuary site.

If you have any questions or comments about our new arrangements, we would like to hear from you. You can reach us on ruby.ali1@nhs.net. Thank you.

Kind regards,

Mr Steve Bush, Medical Director of Operations
Dr Ruby Ali, Associate Director of Operations