

**Out of hours bereavement arrangements at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust – Update
Leeds City Council Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles)
Tuesday 16 January 2024**

1. Background

In February 2023, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) reported to the Leeds Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board regarding the timely release of the bodies of deceased adult patients for ceremonial and burial purposes for religious and cultural reasons. During this engagement, we noted the increasing challenges for the Clinical Site Managers (CSM) to provide the timely release of out of hours provision to the intended level. We considered the continued arrangements are not sustainable for the CSM workload, the experience for families of deceased patients and the needs of other patients in hospital during evenings and weekends.

We noted an impending service review to consider options and opportunities to improve the experience of bereaved families by reviewing the service with less reliance upon Clinical Site Managers.

LTHT supports the out of hours release of approximately 50 bodies of deceased adult patients annually.

The arrangements for out of hours release of bodies of deceased patients from maternity and children's services are separate and this item is focused on adult patients only.

2. Service review and new arrangements

Following an in-depth service review which included feedback from key stakeholders within and external to the Trust, from 2 October 2023, LTHT established a new process for the out of hours release of deceased adult patients through its mortuary service.

The new service is delivered through the Anatomical Pathology Technicians, who are part of the Mortuary Team in the Trust's Pathology Clinical Service Unit. 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. Exceptional requests outside these hours will be considered on a case by case basis.

This new way of working has simplified the lines of communication between colleagues within and outside the organisation, enhancing efficiency, safety and the experience of bereaved loved ones and our people, reducing the number of hand-offs between teams and ensuring quality and compliance is managed through one team. It also has the added advantage of being more cost efficient.

Communication on the new arrangement was shared with Leeds Councillors and Funeral Directors in the Leeds and surrounding areas. Engagement sessions were also held in November 2023 to discuss the new arrangements, meet the mortuary team and the visit the mortuary services at Leeds General Infirmary and St James's University Hospitals.

3. Implementation of the new statutory Medical Examiner System

An update on the implementation of the new statutory Medical Examiner System will be presented during the Scrutiny Board's meeting on 16th January 2024.

4. Next steps

An ongoing review of the service will be maintained to support the effective implementation of the new arrangements and refinements in response to feedback. The arrangement for out of hours release of bodies of deceased patients from the maternity and children's services will be reviewed in 2024 to explore the opportunity to align with the new adult arrangements.

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21 December 2023