

**Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles) – 23 April 2019**  
**Item 8: Bereavement Arrangements at LTHT – supplementary information**

**Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust**  
**Position statement on bereavement services**  
**Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health & Active Lifestyles)**  
**April 2019**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health & Active Lifestyles) has requested information on bereavement services at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) including information on arrangements for the release of a deceased patient out of hours and access to non-invasive post mortem investigations.
- 1.2 Scrutiny committee has asked for this information noting the need to ensure timely release of deceased patients to meet the cultural and religious requirements of communities including the Jewish and Muslim communities.
- 1.3 This paper sets out current practice within LTHT and highlights that the Trust is in the process of reviewing practice against peers within the West Yorkshire Association of Acute Trusts and more widely.

**2. Current practice**

- 2.1 The LTHT mortuary is currently open between 9AM - 4PM Monday to Friday and will facilitate the release of deceased patient to the bereaved family during these hours; arrangements for release out of hours are set out below.
- 2.2 In circumstances where a patient is deceased, and the death is reportable to HM Coroner, the patient's body is stored in the mortuary until such a time as the HM Coroner process concludes and the body is ready for release, this is the responsibility of HM Coroner.
- 2.3 In circumstances where a patient is deceased and the death is not reportable to HM Coroner, the treating doctor completes a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD), and the family make an appointment at the Registrar's to register the death. Once the death has been registered the Registrar issues a Death Certificate and a Green Disposal Certificate to the family. The family pass the Green Disposal Certificate to their chosen Funeral Director who can then attend the Mortuary to remove the deceased. The Green Disposal Certificate reduces the risk of releasing a body which later becomes subject of Coronial involvement.
- 2.4 In circumstances where a death occurs during the night Monday - Friday, it may be possible for a Doctor to complete the MCCD however because the Registrar's office does not operate a 24 hour service, an appointment to register the death can only be made the next working day. The deceased can therefore not be released until the death has been registered and a Green Disposal Certificate issued.
- 2.5 In circumstances where a death occurs outside of mortuary hours, over the weekend or Bank Holidays the release of a patient is authorised and facilitated

**Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles) – 23 April 2019**  
**Item 8: Bereavement Arrangements at LTHT – supplementary information**

by the Clinical Site Managers (CSM). The treating doctor completes the MCCD and the death must be registered. The Registrar's office is open Saturday morning 9am – 12pm, by appointment only, and in addition, both Jewish and Muslim faith leaders in the Leeds area have an arrangement with the Registrar's office and are also able to issue Green Disposal Certificates over weekends and Bank Holidays. So families are able to register the death and be given a Green Disposal Certificate allowing the release of the body over the weekend period.

- 2.6 Post-mortem examinations fall into two categories, those requested by HM Coroner, and those undertaken at the request of the responsible clinician with the appropriate consent of next of kin. In both circumstances post-mortem examinations are only undertaken within histopathology working hours. The only exception to this is a paediatric forensic case due to the time sensitive nature of the police investigation.
- 2.7 LTHT does not currently offer access to non-invasive post mortem investigation however is making provision as part of planning the redevelopment of the Leeds General Infirmary known as 'Building the Leeds Way'. Funding of a non-invasive post mortem service is a consideration which will require engagement with the Coroner and Leeds City Council.

**3. Review of current practice**

- 3.1 Responding to the enquiries made by the Scrutiny Board, LTHT is currently reviewing its practice in regard to the release of deceased patients. To inform the review a benchmarking exercise has been undertaken to establish practice within the West Yorkshire Association of Acute Trusts. From the work undertaken to date LTHT recognises that we have an opportunity to improve the experience of bereaved families by updating our processes for the release of deceased patients, and the review will consider how to do this.
- 3.3 The review will make recommendations to the LTHT Executive Management Group and is expected to be completed by 31 May 2019.