

Report of Head of Democratic Services

Report to Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles)

Date: 17 September 2019

Subject: Bereavement Arrangements at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present further evidence to support the Scrutiny Board's review of bereavement arrangements at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT), which includes the timely release of the bodies of deceased patients for ceremonial and burial purposes; and consideration of the use of non-invasive post mortem techniques.

2 Background

- 2.1 During 2018/19, the Scrutiny Board continued to seek improvements to the bereavement arrangements at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) – particularly focusing on the timely release of the bodies of deceased patients for ceremonial and burial purposes (and the consistency of practice across neighbouring Hospital Trusts) and the potential use of non-invasive post-mortem techniques.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 23 April 2019, the Scrutiny Board considered a report from LTHT outlining that the Trust was currently reviewing its practice in regard to the release of deceased patients. It was reported that a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken to establish practice within the West Yorkshire Association of Acute Trusts: This had highlighted an opportunity for the Trust to improve the experience of bereaved families by updating a number of its processes for the release of deceased patients.

2.3 It was also reported a review to consider how the Trust's processes could be improved was underway and was expected to be completed by 31 May 2019; with the outcomes and recommendations for improvement due to be reported to the LTHT Executive Management Group.

3 Main Issues

3.1 An update from the Trust has been requested and is presented at Appendix 1 for consideration by the Scrutiny Board.

3.2 Appropriate representatives from the Trust have been invited to attend the meeting to present and discuss the attached report.

Additional evidence / information

3.3 For a number of years, the Scrutiny Board have been calling for improvements to LTHT's processes for the timely release of the bodies of deceased patients; and for the consideration of the introduction and use of non-invasive post mortem techniques.

3.4 Through the course of some direct work of the Chair in 2018/19, the Board identified that in parts of Lancashire, all post-mortems undertaken are non-invasive (i.e. digital autopsies) unless there are some very specific circumstances that would require a traditional post-mortem at the outset. It was highlighted to the Board that there remained a high success rate in determining the cause of death when using such non-invasive techniques; with only 10% of post-mortems being inconclusive and subsequently requiring a traditional examination.

3.5 It was also highlighted to the Board that such non-invasive post-mortems are provided at no cost to families.

3.6 Further evidence has now been identified that supports the Board's call for improved processes for the timely release of the bodies of deceased patients; and for the review of current post-mortem practices.

3.7 The following information is available on request and/or accessible through the links provided:

- Chief Coroner's Annual Report 2017/18 – which makes specific reference to the early release of the bodies of deceased patients and post-mortem imaging, available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/764720/report-of-the-chief-coroner-lord-chancellor-2017-18.pdf .
- Coroner 2018 Annual Statistics for England and Wales (published May 2019), available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810303/Coroners_Statistics_Annual_2018.pdf
- Chief Coroner Guidance on the use of post-mortem imaging (re-issued in January 2016), available at:
<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/guidance-no-1-use-of-port-mortem-imaging.pdf>

3.8 Initial contact has been made with the West Yorkshire Eastern Coroner's Service with a view to securing a meeting and discussion with the Coroner and other appropriate representatives. The exact timing of this meeting is still to be determined.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 The information provided in this report provide an update on matters previously considered by the Scrutiny Board and largely relates to external organisations. The details are not currently subject to consultation. However, specific consultation and engagement activity will need to be taken into account if any additional scrutiny activity is deemed appropriate

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules state that, where appropriate, all work undertaken by Scrutiny Boards will '...review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme'. However, the information provided in this report largely relates to external organisations, which may be subject to other considerations relating to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

4.2.2 Matters set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme may need to be taken into account if any additional scrutiny activity is deemed appropriate.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the best council ambitions and objectives.

Climate Emergency

4.3.2 There are no specific climate implications associated with the content of this report. However, such considerations may need to be taken into account if any additional scrutiny activity is deemed appropriate.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

4.4.1 This report has no specific financial implications at this time. Any appropriate matters will need to be taken into account if any additional scrutiny activity is deemed appropriate and if any specific recommendations are being considered.

4.4.2 It should be noted that, due to the funding arrangements for coronial services, any financial implications associated with the consideration of a non-invasive post mortem service would require engagement with the Coroner and need consideration of Leeds City Council and Wakefield Council.

4.4.3 Any consideration of a non-invasive post mortem service beyond the Leeds/Wakefield boundary would also require engagement with other coroners and other local authorities.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report at this time. Any specific matters may need to be taken into account if any additional scrutiny activity is deemed appropriate and if any specific recommendations are being considered

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 The information provided in this report largely relates to external organisations, which may be subject to other considerations relating to risk management. Specific matters may need to be taken into account if any additional scrutiny activity is deemed appropriate.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 This report introduces a range of further evidence to support the Scrutiny Board's review of bereavement arrangements at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT), which includes the timely release of the bodies of deceased patients for ceremonial and burial purposes; and consideration of the use of non-invasive post mortem techniques.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles) is asked to consider the details presented in this report and agree any specific scrutiny actions or future activity.

7 Background papers¹

- 7.1 None used

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.