

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

**Up-date statement on bereavement services
Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles)**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles) has requested an up-date on the work the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) is undertaking regarding its bereavement services.
- 1.2 This follows LTHT's attendance at the Board in April 2019 to talk about arrangements for the timely release of deceased patients out of hours and access to non-invasive post mortem investigations.
- 1.3 This paper sets out progress with this work within LTHT.

2. Release of deceased patients out of hours

- 2.1 As outlined in the April 2019 LTHT briefing on this subject, 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. Hospital staff are required to see a Green Disposal Certificate before body release.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Following review of practice in peer organisations and other NHS Trusts in the West Yorkshire region, a recommendation was made to the LTHT Executive Management Group that LTHT removes the requirement for the Green Form to be seen by staff prior to releasing deceased patients. Instead, a LTHT release authorisation form would be developed for use to support the release process.
- 2.4 The LTHT Executive Management Group have approved the recommendation and requested that operational plans are now made to deliver this change.
- 2.5 The removal of the requirement to see the Green Disposal Certificate ahead of deceased patient release would be applied at all times during the week, rather than just out of hours, to facilitate a timelier release process.

- 2.6. Whilst the change appears minor, it is clearly crucial to ensure that the new process is robust and the change well communicated. The new process will be clearly mapped out for all clinical and support staff to follow, and the bereavement policy up-dated accordingly. LTHT will prepare a thorough communication plan ahead of implementing the new process. HM Coroners and the Registrar's office will be informed of the change in process.
- 2.7. The new process will be fully implemented across LTHT within the next 6 months.
- 2.8. Alongside this change, as a means of supporting earlier release of deceased patients, LTHT is developing a process with the medical staff across its Clinical Service Units (CSUs) to support improved early completion of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD).

3. Non-invasive post-mortems

- 3.1 At the last meeting, it was confirmed that none of the NHS Trusts in West Yorkshire currently provide non-invasive post-mortems. Bradford NHS Foundation Trust currently accesses a private service for some of their cases.
- 3.2 LTHT has been reviewing this as part of its provision in the redevelopment of the Leeds General Infirmary known as 'Building the Leeds Way'. However, it must be noted that this type of scanning requires highly specialist staff and sourcing these to provide a sustainable service is anticipated to be problematic. This will therefore be kept under review as part of the scheme planning.
- 3.3 Funding of a non-invasive post mortem service is a consideration which would require engagement with the Coroner and Leeds City Council.

4. Bereavement office opening time

- 4.3 There was a query at the Scrutiny Board meeting in April 2019 around the morning opening time of the Bereavement office. The Trust is happy to confirm that the office morning opening time, Monday -Friday, is 08:30.

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