

## Review of out of hours bereavement arrangements at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

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

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### Brief summary

- In September 2019, the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board received a briefing from Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) regarding changes to its out of hours bereavement arrangements aimed at improving the experience of bereaved families. Such changes involved the introduction of new processes to enable the timely release of deceased adult patients for ceremonial and burial purposes for religious and cultural reasons.
- While LTHT continues to provide a service to release bodies of deceased adult patients out of hours, it has been brought to the attention of the Scrutiny Board Chair that recent service pressures have identified a need to find a more sustainable approach moving forward and that the Trust is therefore undertaking a further review of its out of hours bereavement arrangements.
- At the request of the Chair, representatives from LTHT have been invited to attend today's meeting to engage with the Scrutiny Board at this early stage of the review process. Details of the review will be shared in the form of a presentation during the meeting.

### Recommendations

Members are requested to consider and provide comment on the information presented by Leeds Teaching Hospital's NHS Trust during today's meeting in relation to its review of out of hours bereavement arrangements.

## What is this report about?

1. In September 2019, the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board received a briefing from Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) regarding changes to its out of hours bereavement arrangements aimed at improving the experience of bereaved families.
2. Such changes involved the introduction of new processes to enable the timely release of deceased adult patients for ceremonial and burial purposes for religious and cultural reasons. Linked to this, the Trust had implemented a new release authorisation form and removed the requirement for the Green Disposal Certificate in order to release a body to a Funeral Director. Secondly, the responsibility for releasing deceased adult patients to funeral directors out of hours was taken on by Clinical Site Managers.
3. However, it has been brought to the attention of the Scrutiny Board Chair that in recent months, it has not been possible for Clinical Site Managers to provide this service to the intended level primarily due to the following:
  - The level of operational pressure within the Trust and the NHS has increased over the last 12 months. This is heightened during periods of increased pressure such as those experienced in November and December with high rates of flu. Clinical Site Managers are required to coordinate functions across the whole hospital out of hours and the demands on their time for a range of priorities has increased.
  - Each release from the mortuary can take up to two hours. Coordination and liaison with wards, funeral directors and families can take up to five hours to coordinate. There are a significant amount of quality checks with requirement to check paperwork and quality assurance to ensure that the release of bodies of deceased patients is undertaken correctly and safely. During this time Clinical Site Managers are not contactable for urgent site issues.
  - Clinical Site Managers are often called directly from families and Funeral Directors to arrange an out of hours release, despite them not being an established first point of contact. Receiving a high volume of calls gives a demand on CSMs' limited time and CSMs have reported feeling pressurised to facilitate the release of bodies ahead of other priorities.
4. While LTHT continues to provide a service to release bodies of deceased adult patients out of hours, the Trust considers the continued arrangements not to be sustainable for CSM workload, the experience for families of deceased patients and the needs of other patients in hospital during evenings and weekends. The Trust is therefore undertaking a further review of its out of hours bereavement arrangements which will include an options appraisal and testing to provide this service with less reliance upon Clinical Site Managers.
5. Representatives from LTHT will be attending today's meeting to engage with the Scrutiny Board at this early stage of the review process. Detail of the review will be shared in the form of a presentation during the meeting and will include a summary of other provision across West Yorkshire; potential options for provision of this service alternative to Clinical Site Managers; engagement plans; and a timeline for piloting and implementation of any new arrangements.

## What impact will this proposal have?

6. The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust has identified a need to undertake a further review of its out of hours bereavement arrangements in order to find a more sustainable approach moving forward.

## How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

## What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes                       No

7. Representatives from LTHT will be attending today's meeting to engage with the Scrutiny Board at this early stage of the review process.

## What are the resource implications?

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

## What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

9. 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.

## What are the legal implications?

10. This report has no specific legal implications.

## Appendices

- None.

## Background papers

- None.