

Information for patients and carers

The Medical Examiner Service

Information for Relatives

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

What is the Medical Examiner Service?

The medical examiner service has been developed following a number of recommendations from key inquiries to provide greater scrutiny of all non-coronial deaths in England and Wales.

The purpose of the medical examiner system is designed to:

- Provide bereaved families with greater transparency and opportunities to raise concerns
- Improve the quality/accuracy of medical certification of cause of death (Death Certificate)
- Ensure referrals to coroners are appropriate
- Provide the public with greater safeguards through improved and consistent scrutiny of all non-coronial deaths, and support healthcare providers to improve care through better learning

What is a Medical Examiner?

A medical examiner is an independent senior doctor trained in the legal and clinical elements of death certification processes. Their role includes:

- Speaking to the doctor who treated the patient on their final illness
- An independent review of the medical records and any supporting diagnostic information
- Agree the proposed cause of death and the overall accuracy of the medical certificate cause of death usually known as the death certificate
- Act as a medical advice resource for the local coroner
- Ensure that patterns and concerns about care are raised appropriately

What is a Medical Examiner Officer?

Medical examiner officers are from a wide range of professional backgrounds trained in the legal and clinical aspects of the death certification process. They manage cases from initial notification through to completion and are essential for the effective and efficient working of the service. The medical examiner officers will obtain all relevant information and carry out a preliminary review to develop a case file that sets out the circumstances of each death for formal scrutiny by the medical examiner.

What questions will I be asked?

You will be contacted by a medical examiner officer following the death of your loved one. The medical examiner officer will explain the process of obtaining the medical certificate cause of death (Death Certificate) and all practical aspects of registering the death. They will also explain what is documented on the medical certificate of cause of death and why, if requested. You will also have the opportunity to raise any questions or concerns about the care the person received before their death. This is the best time for you to ask any questions you have about the death and to speak about anything that concerns you.

Information the medical examiner's office will request to ensure prompt completion of the medical certificate by the attending doctor:

- Have you instructed a funeral director?
- Will the service be a burial or cremation?
- Deceased occupation
- Do you have any questions or concerns?

What will happen if I raise any concerns or have questions?

We are a dedicated team of trained professionals who will listen to your questions and concerns and provide answers if possible. Dependant on the nature of the concerns the medical examiner can escalate these to the appropriate people to investigate. If this is the case, a medical examiner officer will explain the process and what to expect.

What if I do not want to speak to the Medical Examiner?

We appreciate that this is a difficult time for people and talking to the medical examiner is entirely your choice. If you wish to have further information prior to discussing any questions or concerns, please give our dedicated team a call and they will be happy to guide you through the process.

We also work closely with the chaplaincy team and bereavement team who can be a source of support during this difficult time.

The chaplaincy team can be contacted:

Telephone: **01772 522350**

The bereavement team can be contacted:

Telephone: **01772 523730**

Email: bereavement@lthtr.nhs.uk

What if I am dissatisfied with the Medical Examiner service?

If you are not satisfied with the medical examiner service, we advise you discuss this with the medical examiner's office as a first point of contact.

However, if you are still not satisfied you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) where staff will listen to your concerns and refer to the appropriate team to investigate.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Contact Details:

Telephone: **01772 522972**

Email: PALS@lthtr.nhs.uk

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact Medical Examiner's office:

Telephone: **01772 528184**

Email: medical.examiner@lthtr.nhs.uk

Our office is open between 9:00am and 5:00pm Monday to Friday.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

Follow us on social media @lancshospitals

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All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the

buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.
This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

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