

# Medical Examiners Service – Information for Relatives



Following the death of someone important to you, the death will be referred to a Medical Examiner. This leaflet will explain the reason why you will be contacted by the Medical Examiner's office, what will be discussed, and why this system has been introduced.

## Who are Medical Examiners and Medical Examiner Officers?

Senior doctors have received specialist training and spend some of their time working as Medical Examiners at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust. Alongside other trained staff, their job is to provide an independent review of the causes of death – with the exception of deaths which have to be reviewed by a Coroner.

The Medical Examiners ensure that all deaths are reviewed by someone who is independent and who was not involved in the patient's care. The Medical Examiner will work with the treating doctor (such as the GP or specialist doctor) to ensure that the information given on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) is correct and that referrals to the Coroner are made (if needed) as soon as possible.

Medical Examiners and their staff (called Medical Examiner Officers) offer families and carers a chance to ask questions or raise concerns about the cause of death or about the care they received before their death. This will usually be completed over the telephone.

A key role of the Medical Examiner is to make it easier for the bereaved to understand the Medical Certificate which explains the cause of death. Medical Examiners also look at medical records and discuss the causes of death with the doctor filling in the Medical Certificate.

The Medical Examiner service will provide an independent view and they will only review cases where they, or their staff, have not provided care for the patient.

## Coroners

Some deaths must be notified to the Coroner. When the Coroner starts an investigation, they will investigate the death independently - although the Medical Examiner may still provide expert medical advice to the Coroner.

Further information in relation to Coroners can be found on the Ministry of Justice website;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-coroner-services-and-coroner-investigations-a-short-guide>,

or you can e-mail;

[coroners@justice.gov.uk](mailto:coroners@justice.gov.uk).

## What will I be asked when the Medical Examiner's Office contact me?

The Medical Examiner service will explain what is written on the Medical Certificate. They will discuss the care the person received before their death. This is the best time for you to raise questions and speak about anything that concerns you, but you can contact the service to ask further questions if you wish to do so. If the Medical Examiner service cannot provide answers, they will pass them on to someone who can investigate further.

## Why am I being asked if I have any concerns?

A discussion with a Medical Examiner or their staff provides you with an opportunity to have an open and honest conversation and address any worries or concerns with someone who was not involved in providing care to the person who died. It could be as simple as helping you to understand

more about the treatment and cause/s of death or to understand the medical language used. There may be something about the care which you think did not feel right - this is an opportunity to ask questions.

As well as answering your questions, this can help us to learn and provide better care for patients, their families and carers by recognising ways in which care can be improved in the future.

## If it is too difficult for me, can someone else speak to the medical examiner?

Yes, the Medical Examiner service may contact you to ask who you would like us to talk to instead, or you can let the medical team know if you would rather appoint someone else as a point of contact. The Medical Examiner service will usually contact you by phone however, we can make other arrangements if you let us know.

## What if I do not want to speak to the Medical Examiner or their staff or I do not want to tell them about my concerns?

Medical Examiners are independent, so we would like you to speak to them or their staff, if possible. They will help explain things to you and are trained to answer your questions. However, we understand this is a difficult time for many people and so speaking to someone is completely your choice. If you are not sure, you can contact the Medical Examiner Service on:

Telephone: 01743 261384 or 01952 641222 ext 4741

Email: [sath.medicalexaminers@nhs.net](mailto:sath.medicalexaminers@nhs.net)

They can give you more information which will help you decide if you want to speak with the Medical Examiner service, they are trained to help people during difficult times and will be very understanding and supportive.

## Will funeral plans or release of the body take longer?

Medical Examiners make every effort to avoid any delays and work with families and carers of the person who died to meet the legal requirements for registering deaths. Each case will be dealt with individually and, when possible, the Medical Examiner's office will try to give priority to those where relatives need urgent release of the deceased, whilst ensuring due process is undertaken.

## What can I do if I have questions or concerns about the Medical Examiner process?

If you are not satisfied with the Medical Examiner's advice, we suggest you discuss this with staff from the Medical Examiner's office in the first instance. If you are still not satisfied, you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service team (PALS).

You may also contact the doctor the death certificate was issued from which may be a GP.

## How can I contact the Medical Examiner office?

You can contact the Medical Examiner office either by phone or email:

Telephone: 01743 261384 or 01952 641222 ext 4741

Email: [sath.medicalexaminers@nhs.net](mailto:sath.medicalexaminers@nhs.net)

Our office is open between 9:00am and 5:00pm Monday – Friday, the team are available to take your call from 11am onwards.

Further information about the Medical Examiner system can be found on the internet <https://www.england.nhs.uk/establishing-medical-examiner-system-nhs/> .

**Further information is available from:**



## **Feedback**

We appreciate and encourage feedback which can be shared in a number of ways through the hospital website. Scan the QR code to give feedback.

<https://www.sath.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/feedback/>

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, they can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS is a confidential service.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888

## **Other Sources of Information**

### **NHS 111**

A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

111 (free from a landline or mobile)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **Self Help & Support Groups**

A selection of websites providing access to good quality health information, local organisations and community groups is available from the library. [www.library.sath.nhs.uk/find/patients/](http://www.library.sath.nhs.uk/find/patients/)

### **Information in Other Languages or Formats**

If you require this information in a different way such as easy read, a different language, larger print, audio or braille please tell a member of staff or contact the Patient Experience Team;

[sath.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:sath.patientexperience@nhs.net) or 01743 261000 ext. 2503.

**Website:** [www.sath.nhs.uk](http://www.sath.nhs.uk)

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