



University Hospitals
of North Midlands
NHS Trust

Bereavement Information for Relatives and Carers

North Midlands Medical Examiner Service



Introduction

In England and Wales, circumstances surrounding a person's death are either reviewed by a Medical Examiner, or reported to a Coroner (if the death is unnatural or unexpected). This leaflet explains the role of both of these services and provides you with information about what to expect, after the death of a loved one.

About the Medical Examiner Service

Medical Examiners are senior doctors who have received specialist training to become a Medical Examiner. They are situated in the Bereavement Centre at the University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust (UHNM), they also work alongside a team of Medical Examiner Officers, who support the process and administration of all legal paperwork.

The Medical Examiner provides an independent review/scrutiny of the death, offering families and carers of the person who has died an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns about the care their loved one received prior to death. Medical Examiners are independent and therefore will not have been involved in the care of the deceased.

You will usually be contacted by telephone, but the Medical Examiner can arrange other ways of communicating with you (such as by email). If you would prefer, you can nominate another person such as a relative or friend to talk to the Medical Examiner on your behalf.

About the Coroner Service

It is sometimes necessary for the doctor caring for your loved one to report their death to a Coroner (a special type of judge, appointed by a local authority to investigate certain deaths).

There are strict legal requirements about which deaths should be reported to a Coroner. The Medical Examiner review stops or does not take place when a Coroner decides to investigate a death.

National criteria on which deaths need to be reported to a Coroner can be found online:-

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

You can also request the guidance by emailing the Ministry of Justice (the part of the government responsible for the reportable deaths guidance): coroners@justice.gov.uk

Discussion with the Medical Examiner Service

When the Medical Examiner's team get in touch with you, they will:-

- Discuss the proposed cause of death and explain the medical language and terminology.
- Ask if you have any questions or concerns about the cause of death or about the care your loved one received before their death.
- Explain what to do next, such as making an appointment to register the death and appointing a funeral director.

As well as aiming to answer your questions or concerns, this review can help the NHS provide better care for other patients, relatives and carers in the future, by trying to identify ways in which patient and family care could be improved. Any potential learning opportunities are shared by the Medical Examiner Service with the relevant healthcare provider or organisation, as part of NHS Learning from Deaths framework.

If any significant issues or concerns are raised during the discussion, it may be that further investigation is necessary and this will be referred to another department or organisation who can carry this out.

The Medical Examiner cannot carry out investigations themselves, as their work must be completed within set time limits to meet relevant legal requirements for registering deaths. The Medical Examiner Service will make every effort to avoid any delays to your funeral arrangements, and the service is sensitive to different cultural and religious requirements of the bereaved.

Contacting the Medical Examiner Service

The Medical Examiner's team will contact you directly using details provided by your loved one's GP, hospice, hospital or other healthcare provider, once a referral has been made to the Medical Examiner Service. You shouldn't need to contact the Medical Examiner Service yourself, but if you do have any further questions you can get in touch by:-

Telephone: 01785 230532

Email: medicalexaminer.referrals@nhs.net

Please speak to a member of staff if you need this leaflet in larger print, braille, audio or another language