

9th September 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for your recent Freedom of Information request regarding information on deceased patients.

The Trust can provide the following information:

1. What happens when a patient dies in the care of the trust and there are no details of the next of kin provided? The Hospital Bereavement service contacts the relevant local authority to facilitate a search of the deceased's home for information relating to NOK and finances.

2. Who tries to locate/trace the next of kin if the information is unknown? (name, department and contact details) The Hospital Bereavement services (please contact Homerton main switchboard on 0208 510 5555)

3. What are the steps taken to locate the next of kin of the deceased patient? See Q1

4. What happens when the trust is unable to locate the next of kin? Bereavement staff registers the death and arrange a hospital funeral

5. If the patient dies within the care of the trust and the next of kin cannot be traced, whose responsibility is it to provide a funeral? (name and contact details) This responsibility formally rests with the local authority, but this action is normally carried out by the hospital.

6. On how many instances has the trust provided a funeral for a patient? The Trust has provided 18 hospital funerals from January 2014 to present, only 6 of which were for patients with no known NOK.

7. Of these public health funerals please provide:

a) Name of deceased

b) Date of birth and date of death

c) Last residential address

d) Have the next of kin/family members been traced?

e) What date have the details been referred to the QLTR, Bona Vacantia, Treasury Solicitor, Government Legal Department, National Ultimus Haeres, Duchy or Farrer & Co?

The Trust is unable to release this information as it was provided in confidence and as such, the Homerton Hospital is required to comply with the common law duty of confidentiality which clearly stipulates that the duty of confidentiality continues to apply even after a person has died. Furthermore we have received no explicit consent from the deceased or the deceased relatives' to release their personal information into the public domain.

8. Have there been cases where the trust has referred/or plan on referring details of the deceased patient to the Treasury Solicitor/Government Legal Department, Bona Vacantia, National Ultimus Haeres, Crown Solicitor, Duchy Farrer & Co or QLTR? Yes

9. Which other organisations have details (of the deceased with no known kin) been passed to and why? If required, Banks are contacted to discuss arrangements for recovering the costs of the funeral.

10. Does the trust conduct an asset search and/or will search? It is the local authority's responsibility to look for a will and evidence of assets when they search the property of the deceased.

11. Which department deals with the deceaseds assets? (name and contact details) The property office refers to the Treasury Solicitor. The Trust has no responsibility for patients' property not in their possession at the time of death.

12. Is the trust responsible for selling the assets in order to compensate for the funeral costs? Any valuables found relating to the deceased are normally held to cover the funeral costs.

13. Does the trust have an Empty Homes department? (name, contact details) No

14. What is the role of the Empty Homes department? N/A

If you have any queries about this response please contact the information governance manager at foi@homerton.nhs.uk, in the first instance. If, following that, you still have any concerns, you may contact the Information Commissioner either by letter, FOI/EIR Complaints resolution, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SM9 5AF, or by email www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk to take them further.

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Yours sincerely

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Incorporating hospital and community health services, teaching and research