

## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE MEDICAL EXAMINER SERVICE

### Important information for families following a bereavement in the community

#### What is the Medical Examiner Service?

There is a legal requirement for all deaths in England & Wales to be reviewed either by a Medical Examiner or a Coroner before paperwork can be issued and a death registered. Most reviews will be managed by the Medical Examiner Service.

Medical Examiners (MEs) and Medical Examiner Officers (MEOs) are now available to provide support for bereaved families and help improve future care. Medical Examiners are senior doctors from a range of specialities including general practice. They provide advice regarding the cause of death and independent scrutiny of the care of the deceased. They are supported by a team of Medical Examiner Officers. All staff are trained by the Royal College of Pathologists, in the legal and clinical aspects of death certification.

The Medical Examiner will only review cases where they have NOT been involved in the patient's care themselves, which allows them to maintain complete independence. Medical Examiners and Medical Examiner Officers look at the relevant medical records and discuss the causes of death with the doctor completing the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (sometimes referred to as the MCCD or death certificate).

#### When and why will you be contacted?

You will be contacted by one of our team once the Medical Examiner service receives the referral from your GP practice. This will be to offer you an opportunity to have an open and honest conversation with someone who was not involved in providing care to the person who has died. It could be as simple as helping you understand more about the treatment and causes of death, or to explain the medical terminology used. This is your opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns you may have. It will allow the Medical Examiner service to identify areas where care might be improved or highlight areas where care has been excellent and allow feedback to the services involved.

#### What will happen if any concerns are raised?

The Medical Examiner and their team are available to listen to your questions, concerns and if possible, provide answers, or can signpost you to others who may be able to help. If during the review of the notes and the discussion with you anything requires looking into further, this will be fed back to the relevant teams. This can help provide better care for other patients and families in the future.

#### What if you do not wish to speak to the Medical Examiner or their team?

We understand this can be a difficult time for many people. Speaking to someone is completely your choice. The Medical Examiner team are trained professionals who can guide and help you during this time. If you prefer them to speak with someone else in your family this is acceptable, and the Medical Examiner team will be very understanding of your wishes.

#### Will the service delay the funeral arrangements?

Medical Examiners make every effort to avoid any delays and work with families to enable death registration in a timely manner. Deaths cannot be registered until the Medical Examiners process has taken place. Each case will be dealt with individually and when necessary, the team will support families with a request for the urgent release of their relative.

Medical Examiners are an independent service led by NHS England, hosted by Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust.

Please get in contact with us by e-mail or telephone.

Email: [bht.buckinghamshiremedicalexaminerofficers@nhs.net](mailto:bht.buckinghamshiremedicalexaminerofficers@nhs.net)

Telephone: 01296 831919

You can also find further information about Medical Examiners on the internet at: [NHS England » The national medical examiner system](#)

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Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

#### **How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?**

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

#### **Patient Advice Sheet**

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email [bht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:bht.pals@nhs.net)