

## Job Description

<b>Job Title: Medical Examiner &amp; Bereavement Officer</b>	<b>Band: 5</b>
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<b>Accountable to:</b> Regional Medical Examiner
<b>Responsible for:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting the Medical Examiners in their role in scrutinising the circumstances and causes of death.</li> <li>Liaising directly with the recently bereaved, Mortuary staff, Medical Examiners, clinicians, nursing staff, porters, funeral directors, police, Coroner's Office, Registrar of Births and Deaths, crematorium staff and GP surgeries on a daily basis and on a range of topics relating to the scrutiny of deaths and management of deceased patients.</li> <li>Providing support and sympathetic assistance to bereaved relatives, family and carers guiding them through the procedure required following the death of a patient in hospital or in the community, ensuring that all contacts are handled in a caring, professional and timely manner.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Relationships with:-</b> <b>Internal:</b> - Medical Examiners, doctors, ward staff, mortuary staff <b>External:</b> Bereaved people, Coroner's officers, police, funeral directors and registration services

<p><b>Purpose of Role:</b></p> <p>The post holder shall provide the primary administrative support for the Medical Examiners by collating and documenting information pertaining to a deceased patient's care episode and past medical history. Identifying which deaths require referral to HM Coroner and providing an administrative contact between Doctors, Wards, Funeral Directors, Midwives and the Chaplaincy and to liaise with medical staff to expedite timely completion of Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCD) and Cremation forms.</p> <p>The Medical Examiner role is an essential element to expedite the completion and release of a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death to the family of the deceased. Delays in the process can cause distress to the bereaved and prolong the length of time a patient is held in our Mortuary.</p> <p>The post holder will liaise with Medical Examiners, HM Coroner's Office, Registration Services, Crematoria, Funeral Directors, next of Kin, Police, Solicitors, Social Services, tissue and organ donation co-ordinators, anatomy schools and GP Practices on a range of matters as required on a daily basis to facilitate the process of releasing deceased patients from our care.</p> <p>The post holder shall provide advice and support to the recently bereaved, Medical Examiners, clinicians, funeral directors and partner organisations ensuring information sharing is managed appropriately. Time will be divided between the Medical Examiner's Office function and the function of a Bereavement Officer on a rota basis. This provides a degree of independence from Trust activity that is essential to the running of the Medical Examiner's function. It is envisaged that the time spent on MEO functions will make up the greater proportion of the post holder's time; particularly as the ME service extends to include all community deaths in the near future.</p> <p>The post holder will work in the Medical Examiner's Office. The Medical Examiner's Office will manage the flow around 4000 deceased patients from the hospital, Emergency Department and the community annually.</p> <p>There is little control over workload or work flow and demands can fluctuate considerably from day to day. Much of the activity is dictated by third party availability and the needs of service users. A proactive and organised approach is essential to ensure the timely completion of all required documentation. The bereaved need to be treated with sensitivity and the approach needs to be sufficiently flexible to adapt to the needs of individuals.</p>
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## **Key Responsibilities:**

### **Leadership**

- The post holder shall directly report to the Lead Medical Examiners Officer.
- There is an expectation that post holders shall contribute to the training and assist with supporting and supervising newly appointed staff

### **Service Delivery and Improvement**

- Working practices must comply with all national regulations, statutory requirements and Trust Policies. Departmental Standard Operating Procedures must be followed at all times. There are areas of National Guidance that apply and may be employed as best practice to inform local policy.
- Contribute to the ongoing development of Policies and Procedures and patient information leaflets as required to reflect best practice in the delivery of the Medical Examiners system, and to improve the services offered to the bereaved. Where shortfalls are identified in processes to escalate these for remedial action to be taken and offer suitable solutions.
- Help to distribute the Trust Bereavement Surveys sent out quarterly.
- Escalate service deficiencies and problem areas to the Mortuary & Bereavement Services Manager and the Trust End of Life Care Steering Group as appropriate.

### **Financial and Performance Management**

- Ensure all Trust resources are used efficiently, safely and effectively in particular any high value items.
- Ensure department's stock of stationary and other consumables is maintained by requesting replenishment as necessary.
- Ensure the correct handling and safekeeping of patient cash and valuables, (usually no greater in value than a few hundred pounds, but occasionally in excess of a thousand pounds). Ensuring an audit trail is maintained for all items to evidence safe return to the next of kin.
- Receiving payments for doctors for disbursements, in relation to cremation documentation.

### **Risk Management and Governance**

- The post holder shall work within their scope of practice and escalate cases as necessary to the appropriate person(s).
- Working practices must comply with all national regulations, statutory requirements and Trust Policies. Departmental Standard Operating Procedures must be followed at all times. There are areas of National Guidance that apply and may be employed as best practice to inform local policy.
- Untoward incidents shall be reported using the Trust incident reporting system
- Any identified risks shall be reported to the LEAD MEO or Service Lead for escalation to the Divisional Management Team.

### **Corporate**

- To adhere to the Trust values and behaviours as outline as part of the Time Matters initiative.
- To adopt the values of Caring Communication and Consistently address, when witnessed, poor behaviours accordingly

### **General**

- The post holder must have excellent verbal and non-verbal communication skills and possess the ability to both listen and question.
- Form effective working relations with all members of the Bereavement, MEO and Mortuary team to ensure an effective and efficient service.
- Liaise with Trust doctors and consultants to support them to undertake timely and effective death certification following the death of a patient in hospital. Act as an intermediary between the bereaved and clinicians to establish and resolve any concerns relating to a patient's death.
- Provide advice and support to ward staff on care after death procedures and administration of patient property.
- Provide guidance and instruction to attending clinicians as required on completion of Medical Certificate of Cause of Death, Cremation forms and where required referral of death to HM Coroner ensuring compliance with statutory requirements.
- Advise clinicians attending to complete MCCD regarding acceptable causes of death for certification.
- Use own knowledge gained through training and experience to determine if a referral to HM Coroner is

required and ensure the referring clinician completes all required information. Liaise with HM Coroner and officers to share information as part of a death investigation procedure.

- Provide support to the hospital chaplaincy team and Spiritual/Faith community leads to support religious and cultural beliefs of the deceased and their families.
- Review health records to collate and document the dataset required to assist the ME with scrutiny of patient care and history. As part of this process the post holder shall identify any potential reason for referral of death to HM Coroner and accurately document this on the ME report form on the Eden database.
- Ensure all communications with families and partner organisations are accurately recorded on relevant IT systems
- Liaise with GP and practice staff to share information with regard to the deceased.
- Liaise with school of anatomy and the next of kin of the deceased where a patient wishes to bequeath their body for donation.
- Alert the Medical Examiner to any family concerns about care, complexity of family dynamics, and requirements for urgent release of a body due to religious reasons.
- Perform preliminary review of medical records to identify clinical and circumstantial information, sourcing and providing additional details where required, for scrutiny by the Medical Examiner and completing Form ME-1A.
- Assist with referral to the Coroner for further investigation on approval by the Medical Examiner.
- Accurately record new admissions including logging patient property on the computer database (Eden).
- Use of Careflow, Evolve, Eden, ICCA, ICE, PACS, Watchpoint, Systmone, and paper based systems as required to log activity, track Health Records and facilitate communications with partner organisations.
- To ensure all relevant information and documentation is completed and accurately recorded onto EDEN and other databases (e.g. Portal) as applicable.
- To ensure that all documentation, medical records and patient property is stored securely or returned to the appropriate area and that such storage complies with all Trust and external regulations and procedures.
- Identify the appropriate clinician in line with statutory requirements to contact and request attendance to complete all necessary documentation by assessing the medical notes.
- Transmit encrypted referral documentation plus MCCD (where applicable) to HM Coroner via a secure email account.
- Where a hospital post-mortem is to be requested, advise the senior clinician and next of kin on the appropriate process. Arrange the meeting with the next of kin and clinician, providing information and guidance acquired through training and experience. Ensure the completion of all relevant documentation and the consent seeking process is conducted in compliance with The Human Tissue Authority Codes of Practice. Provide support and guidance to the next of kin as required during the consent process.
- To Issue Medical Certificates of Cause of Death to relatives or other authorised recipient giving advice to the bereaved on the information required for registration in line with the Births and Death Registration Act 1953. Give support and practical advice to the bereaved on the required procedure following a death and make an appointment for them to attend the Registrar of Births and Deaths if they have not already done so.
- Return belongings and cash to next of kin as appropriate in line with Departmental Procedures and Trust Policy; ensuring accurate documentation has been completed throughout. Confirming that any cash listed is fully accounted for documented and receipted by next of kin.
- If relatives wish to discuss tissue donation, contact Tissue Services to arrange meeting. Liaise with mortuary to arrange for retrieval by a suitably trained technician or visiting retrieval team.
- Where no next of kin exist, or any other relevant people, conduct searches to identify any family/solicitor/will. Arrange contract funerals for those deceased patients with no known relatives or means to pay for a funeral by referring the death to the relevant local authority.
- Liaise with the Midwifery Department regarding baby deaths that have occurred in hospital for neonates and stillborn babies and collate all necessary paperwork for release for funeral
- Arrange viewings/formal identifications for families/police, often in difficult circumstances and provide support to the bereaved during and after viewings as required.
- When a viewing is arranged, check the identification and condition of the deceased in line with department procedures to ensure the correct patient has been prepared.
- Liaise with funeral directors on a range of matters including completion of certificates, collection of patients, fees/payments and any other details relevant to cremation or burial procedures. Distribute to relevant doctor's cheques for cremation fees.
- Work closely with MEO colleagues to provide an effective and efficient service by using their experience, initiative and judgement to organise the daily work routine, manage workload and ensure priorities are

met.

- Ensure that stocks of “Bereavement Packs” and bereavement information leaflets are available on each ward.
- Assist in the training of less experienced staff both within the department and other Trust areas.
- Use of own knowledge of legal and procedural requirements gained through training and experience to provide support and advice to the bereaved on a range of issues relating to, but not exclusive to, death registration, Coroner’s investigation and funeral arrangements.
- Support families during and after viewing the deceased within the Mortuary viewing facility. This can either be as part of a formal identification process for sudden deaths or at the request of the bereaved. Deceased can often be disfigured from accidents or decomposition. Any such appearances need to be sensitively communicated to the persons(s) in attendance.

### General

- To be responsible for complying with Trust and local Safeguarding policies and procedures.
- To be responsible for the quality of data recorded. The data should be accurate, legible (if hand written), recorded in a timely manner, kept up to date and appropriately filed.
- All employees must comply with the East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust’s Equality and Diversity Policy and must not discriminate on the grounds of sex, colour, race, ethnic or national origins, marital status, age, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief.
- Employees have a responsibility to themselves and others in relation to managing risk and health and safety, and will be required to work within the policies and procedures laid down by East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust. The Trust seeks to establish a safe and healthy working environment for its employees and operates a non-smoking policy.
- All employees have the right to work in an environment which is safe and to be protected from all forms of abuse, violence, harassment and undue stress. All employees are responsible for helping to ensure that individuals do not suffer harassment or bullying in any form. All employees will be personally accountable for their actions and behaviour in cases of complaint of harassment or bullying.
- All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a reduction in the Trust’s carbon footprint and should pro-actively reduce and encourage others through own actions to reduce their contribution to carbon emissions. This includes switching off electrical appliances that are not in use, turning down heating, closing windows, switching off lights and reporting carbon waste etc.

Prepared By:

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Date:

20<sup>th</sup> May 2022

## Person Specification

**Job Title: Medical Examiner & Bereavement Officer**

**Band: 5**

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of working with bereaved families or within a customer focussed setting.</li> <li>• Experience of dealing with highly contentious and emotional situations.</li> <li>• Ability to communicate complex and potentially distressing information to the bereaved in a clear and tactful manner.</li> <li>• Ability to communicate clearly with people with varied levels of understanding adapting the use of technical language to meet the needs of each individual.</li> <li>• Ability to work across professional boundaries with medical staff in different specialties.</li> </ul>	
<b>Qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educated to A-Level or equivalent standard of education and/or evidence of study/equivalent practical experience at an advanced level.</li> <li>• Completion of the core modules of the ELearning for Medical Examiner's or willingness to complete this within 3 months of appointment</li> <li>• Completion of Face to face training for Medical Examiner's or willingness to complete this within 12 months of appointment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A commitment to the concept of lifelong learning and undertaking personal development opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound knowledge and understanding of death certification and registration processes and associated legislation including Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953, Coroner's and Justice Act 2009, Cremation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An understanding of medical terminology that enables informed discussions about the causes/circumstances of deaths with bereaved families, clinicians, coroner and</li> </ul>

	<p>regulations 2018 and Human Tissue Act 2004.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IT Skills (Microsoft Outlook/ Word/ ICE, Evolve, and other Trust IT systems). The ability to learn and adapt to new systems quickly.</li> </ul>	<p>registration staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of the special requirements of the various faith groups with an awareness of equality and diversity issues surrounding death certification &amp; arrangements.</li> <li>Working knowledge &amp; experience of the Department of Health's Death Certification Reforms Medical Examiner system.</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellent interpersonal skills demonstrating the ability to communicate in difficult and emotional situations with empathy, professionalism and understanding.</li> <li>Excellent communication skills, written and verbal, (emails, Forms, letters, telephone) with the ability to engage at all levels, both within and outside the Trust, including senior clinicians/coroners, etc. about sensitive issues.</li> <li>Be able to listen to others and represent their views and concerns in a clear and concise manner.</li> <li>Ability to work effectively with multidisciplinary teams.</li> <li>Ability to work as part of a team and organise work around fluctuating workload, competing priorities, with excellent organisational skills and the ability to plan systematically.</li> <li>Accept responsibility for own area of work and demonstrate a creative and inspirational approach to problem solving. Proactive and self-motivated.</li> <li>Approachable and supportive to all levels of staff and bereaved families in a non-judgemental and discreet manner.</li> <li>Professional manner and has the awareness of the impact of own behaviour on others.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrable ability to work to deadlines and achieve agreed objectives.</li> <li>• Maintains and develops own knowledge and skills through appraisal, participating in further training, in order to sustain and enhance the service to patients and families.</li> <li>• Competent with IT software systems including Access, Word &amp; Excel, and the ability to learn new systems and ways of working quickly</li> </ul>	
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