

Public Health Funerals

Where a person dies in NHS care, the NHS may arrange and pay for the funeral under s.46(1) of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 if there are no relatives or friends who are willing or able to do so.

Updated: 2 May 2017

FOI 1617.161

1. How many public health funerals did St George's arrange in the last financial year (2015/16)?

8

2. How were the funerals providers found - on a case-by-case basis or part of a larger contract?

The Trust has a hospital funeral contract

3. Whose role was it to find the funeral director?

Procurement department sent out tender

4. Would you list each funeral with the following details for each: the date, whether the body was buried or cremated, whether a funeral service was held, the total cost, and the funeral provider used, whether a local council or another NHS trust contributed any money for this funeral, and if so which.

- a) Dates of the funerals were 5 August 2015, 6 August 2015, 14 December 2015, 16 December 2016, 17 December 2016, 12 February 2016, 19 February 2016, 17 March 2016.
- b) All were cremations
- c) All had funeral services
- d) £5270
- e) The Co-operative Funeralcare
- f) No contributions from local council or other NHS Trust.

From 1617.477

Under the Freedom of Information Act within the last 24 months (prior to Dec 2016) please provide the following information:

1) For each public health funeral please provide :

a) The deceased persons first name and surname

b) The deceased persons date of death and date of birth

c) The last known residence of the deceased

d) Has the next of kin of the deceased been traced?

e) The date on which these details and any additional details have been referred to the Government Legal Department/ Treasury Solicitor, Duchy of Lancaster, Duchy of Cornwall, QLTR, National Ultimus Haeres, or any other organisation.

f) Name of any other organisation that these details have been passed to.

1. We are unable to provide the information that you have requested in Question 1. The information would originally have been provided to a healthcare practitioner in confidence, and we consider this duty of confidentiality to extend beyond death. Section 41 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 covers this eventuality and so we are unable to provide you with the personal details about the deceased that you have asked for.

From 1617.477

2) Please provide name and contact details of the person and department who would need to contact family members or next of kin following a public health funeral.

2. The Bereavement Services Department. bereavement.services@stgeorges.nhs.uk – 020 8725 3410.

From 1617.477

3) Does the Trust use tracing agents to find the next of kin?

3. Yes the Trust does on occasion use tracing agents (genealogists) to trace next of kin.

1. Does the Trust use Research companies to locate the next of kin of a deceased person for whom the Trust has taken responsibility for conducting a public health funeral.

Yes.

2. Which research companies has the Trust used

Estate Research

3. Has the Trust also used any other research companies? If so, which?

No.

4. For what specific reason does the Trust provide information to the researcher(s) to locate the next of kin of deceased persons who die in the district?

To allow them to be aware that their relative has died so they can pay their respects if they wish. They also may wish to be involved with the funeral.

5. Which statutory function (if any) is the Trust fulfilling when it engages researchers to seek to identify next of kin?

None but it is best practice to make reasonable attempts to trace next of kin.

6. In particular, what is the perceived benefit to the Trust of entering into this arrangement?

None save for if relative takes on funeral arrangements.

7. Why does the Trust choose to provide information to a researcher rather than simply refer all deaths which are intestate with no known next of kin and assets of over £500 to the Government Legal Department's Bona Vacantia Division?

Patients often do not have over £500 in assets. We also wish to avoid distress to relatives by allowing them to be aware of the death, and of the funeral before it happens.

1. What due diligence process was used and against which criteria were the chosen companies selected in preference to any other research company?

Research revealed this company is used by other NHS Trusts; testimonials given on website; and it is accredited by a number of organisations including the Information Commissioner's Office.

2. Why is the information not passed to more than one researcher at a time?

For speed and simplicity.

3. Is the Trust aware that the research company is likely to derive a commercial benefit from the location of next of kin and that there are financial implications for the next of kin arising from the Trust making referrals to a single researcher?

The Trust policy on Deceased patient Capacity Management sets out the circumstances under which the Trust would utilise an agency to search for a deceased patient's next of kin. Whether or not there are financial implications for the next of kin depends on a number of factors, and we do not have any recorded information that we can provide to you in this regard.

4. Any arrangement between the Trust and the research company will form a contract, even if not formalised. Please provide copies of any and all documents associated with the arrangement including (but not limited to) any tender documents, written contract, confidentiality agreement and referral emails.

There is no contract or other information requested. This is a service free to use for the Trust so no contractual arrangement is necessary.

5. Please provide a list or spreadsheet of the names, date of death and date of birth of any deceased persons for whom any genealogical company was used to trace relatives, from the first recorded referral to the most recent.

12. Under section 41 of the Freedom of Information Act we are unable to provide information given to us in confidence by a third party.

6. Does the Trust have a Death in Hospital Procedure or similar written policy or procedure relating to the process that is followed when an individual dies in hospital with no known relatives? If so, please provide a copy.

Yes. The policy is the Deceased Patient Capacity Management Policy.

7. Does the Trust employ or contract a house clearance company or company providing similar property-related services as part of the process of dealing with the estate following a death in hospital which qualifies for a public health funeral? If so, please provide contact details for this company and any documents associated with the arrangement including (but not limited to) any tender documents, written contract, confidentiality agreement and referral emails.

No.

1617.234

1. Does the trust refer deceased's estates to the Government Legal Department (GLD), QLTR, NUHU, Duchy of Cornwall or Duchy of Lancaster (Farrer & Co), and what does this information entail?

We can refer a deceased' estate to the Government Legal Department

2. Who refers this information? (Please provide a name, contact address & telephone number / email address)

It would be the Bereavement Services Team – bereavement.services@stgeorges.nhs.uk

3. Within the last 6 months, of the cases where details have been referred to the Government Legal Department (GLD), QLTR, NUHU, Duchy of Cornwall or Duchy of Lancaster (Farrer & Co), please provide the following details:

- Name of the deceased
- Maiden name (if applicable)
- Date of birth
- Place of birth
- Date of death
- Place of death
- Last known address
- Marital status of the deceased
- If a widow or widower, the name and date of death of spouse

We have not had any referrals in the past 6 months (date of FOI?)

4. Does the trust attempt to search for family members of the deceased?

Yes the trust searches for family members of the deceased, sometimes with the help of genealogists

5. How long does the trust spend searching for this information?

4 months

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