

MORTUARY SERVICES USER HANDBOOK

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HOSPITAL VIEWING OF THE DECEASED

All hospital viewings are conducted by a mortuary technician. All viewings must therefore be arranged by first contacting the mortuary technician and will be by **appointment only**.

The mortuary technicians can be contacted on the relevant extension:

Site	Extension	Direct Dial In
North Tyneside Mortuary	x2555	(0191)293 2555
Wansbeck Mortuary	X33745	(01670) 529745
Hexham Mortuary	x5013	(01434) 655013
NSECH Mortuary	X72263	(0191) 6072263

The mortuary technician on call can be contacted via switchboard.

It is important that all staff are aware that the mortuary technician is always available to give advice and may be contacted as detailed above.

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE FOR WARDS - ARRANGEMENT OF VIEWINGS AND IDENTIFICATIONS

Monday to Friday, Mortuary viewing hours (excluding Bank holidays):

- NTGH: 8.30-16.00
- HGH: 8.30-12.00
- WGH: 13.30-16.30
- NSECH: 8.30-16.00

For urgent requests and/or special arrangements outside of these hours, there is an on call service provided by the on call mortuary technician who can be contacted via the hospital switchboard for advice.

During weekday hours, the NTGH mortuary (ext 2555) can also be contacted for advice/requests relating to HGH & WGH mortuaries.

Weekend / Bank Holidays viewing times are available **between 10am and 2pm**

All wards should contact the mortuary technician on call via the switchboard.

All viewings will be by appointment only. Relatives must be informed of this by ward staff. Ward staff are requested to speak directly with a mortuary technician to make an appointment on behalf of relatives. Please do not agree appointment times with relatives before first speaking to the mortuary technician.

In the event of exceptional circumstances, viewings may need to be arranged outside the scheduled times detailed above viewings will also be at the discretion of the mortuary technician and may result in a delay/wait due to travelling time between hospital sites.

Viewing times will be booked at half hour intervals and the importance of attending the mortuary at the agreed time must be stressed to relatives by ward staff. This is to avoid the situation of more than one group of relatives attending the mortuary at any one time, as there is only one waiting room on all sites.

If a death occurs on the ward, relatives should be given 2 options:

- They view the deceased on the ward before the body is transferred to the mortuary
- They telephone the ward at 9am the following day to arrange an appointment to view.

On no account must relatives be informed that an immediate viewing will be possible without first contacting the mortuary technician.

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE FOR THE ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY DEPT.

Identifications must be done in the A&E Dept. All other viewings will be done by the mortuary technician within the specified times.

BODIES BROUGHT IN BY FUNERAL DIRECTORS DIRECT TO THE MORTUARY

Viewings / identifications will be arranged by contacting the mortuary technician subject to the procedure outlined previously.

POST-MORTEM EXAMINATIONS

The Department will perform post-mortem examinations at North Tyneside and Hexham hospitals when there is proper documented consent.

Wansbeck & NSECH hospital mortuaries are used for body storage only.

Coroner Post Mortem - Consideration must always be given to possible referral to the **Coroner** in the first instance. Circumstances in which the **Coroner** should be informed are:

- ◆ Any uncertified death
- ◆ Any death caused by an accident arising out of the use of a vehicle including an aircraft, ship or a train
- ◆ Any death of a person while at work
- ◆ Any death resulting from an accident in the course of work or arising out of industrial disease or poisoning
- ◆ Any death due to poisoning
- ◆ Any death where the circumstances indicate that suicide may be a possibility
- ◆ Any death under medical care when a death certificate cannot be issued.
- ◆ Any death resulting from an accident
- ◆ Any death following an abortion or attempted abortion
- ◆ Any death where the circumstances seem to indicate fault or neglect on the part of another person
- ◆ Any death occurring while the deceased was in legal custody
- ◆ Any death of a new-born child whose body is found
- ◆ Any death (occurring not in a house) where deceased's residence is unknown
- ◆ Any death by drowning
- ◆ Any death of a child by suffocation including overlaying
- ◆ Any death which may be sudden death in infancy syndrome
- ◆ Any death occurring as a result of food poisoning or an infectious disease
- ◆ Any death by burning or scalding or as a result of a fire or explosion
- ◆ Any death of a foster child
- ◆ Any death possibly linked to defects in medicinal products
- ◆ Any other death due to violent, suspicious or unexplained cause
- ◆ Any other death which comes in circumstances when its immediate arrival is unexpected or sudden.

Hospital Post Mortem Examination on an Adult

If referral to the Coroner is **not** appropriate, delegated consent may be sought from the next of kin for a Hospital post mortem. **Consent must be taken by an appropriately trained consent taker.**

Guidelines are included on the first page of the **Hospital Post Mortem request form** (available from all mortuaries). Important points include:

1. If possible discuss first with the Consultant Pathologist on post-mortem duty.
2. **Delegated consent** must be sought by the appropriately trained consent taker who will help the next of kin complete the "Consent to a Hospital Post Mortem Examination on an Adult" form.
(Trust **Consent takers are: Two senior mortuary technicians**)
3. Consent must include consideration of organ retention particularly in Neurological disease, Congenital Heart disease etc.
4. Appropriate clinical details must be supplied including possible risks to Pathology staff. Always inform the Pathology office of a request for post mortem (Ext: 2536) as soon as consent is complete.
5. Any suspicion of the possibility of Jacob Creutzfeld disease is a contra-indication to routine post mortem investigation.

The completed Hospital Post Mortem request form & Consent form with notes should reach the appropriate mortuary office before 11.00am if possible.

Where a case presents exceptional features, e.g. an unusual infection or metabolic disorder, attention should be drawn to this during the initial telephone call and also in the post-mortem request form.

N.B. When the case is known or suspected of presenting an exceptional infectious, radioactive or toxic hazard (such as Hepatitis B and C or active tuberculosis), the clinician requesting the post-mortem examination is required under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) to inform the Pathologist concerned before the examination is started.