

# SMALL CHANGES, BIG DIFFERENCE!

## Mortuary & Bereavement Services Quality Improvements

“What a lovely idea the flowers are.  
Can I take another one to send to my  
cousin in Australia?”  
*patient's relative*

“The bereavement booklet has  
been a great support & guide.”  
*patient's relative*

“Can we please have more of the  
blank cards for other family  
members.”  
*patient's relative*

“The thoughts, words and wishes  
cards have been a great help,  
thank you.”  
*patient's relative*

### Changes

**Feedback**  
Introduced a 'comments' feedback log for verbal feedback received from bereaved family

**Cards**  
Blank 'Thoughts, words and wishes' card with envelope introduced, to give an opportunity to communicate one more time with the person who has died.

**Seeded memory cards**  
Seeded poem card - butterfly with wild flower seeds for babies and forget me nots for adults.

**Property bags**  
Improved the quality of property bags for deceased patient's property.

**Staff information cards**  
Bereavement services information card given to all nursing staff to improve service provision, communication and tissue donation. Prompts to open discussion about tissue donation on reverse.

**Colour changing lights**  
Colour changing lights in visiting room, used to diffuse post mortem skin colour changes and improve the visual appearance of the patient without the use of make up or chemicals.

**Transfer bed cover**  
Development of bed cover to transfer patients from ward to mortuary in own bed rather than concealment trolley.

### Impact

Verbal comments now noted and fed in to EOL strategy group using feedback log. Opportunity to search for themes of comments.

Excellent feedback from relatives, friends whom have used the cards. Found the cards to be a great source of comfort to have their words with the person who has died.

Seeded card keepsakes, have been taken in multiples by relatives to distribute to other family members. Some families have planted the seeds and relocated the flowers when they moved home. They have been useful for parents, where children have been bereaved, as a tool to aid understanding of grief.

Patient belongings now returned to relatives in a long handled soft material bags. Staff also required to pack items sensitively and not over pack each bag.

Greater confidence asking about tissue donation and giving a choice to relatives.

Colour changing lights have allowed elements of pink or blue to a room when visiting babies. They have also improved the visual appearance of some patients where decomposition has started.

Bed cover allows patients to be transferred on the bed rather than using a traditional concealment trolley. Improved safety to staff by reducing manual handling of patient and improved dignity to patient by the reduction of manual handling.

Regular comments from staff that they are impressed to hear that mortuary staff feel they are 'an extension of patient care' within the Trust.

### Outcomes

Greater understanding of the care after death procedure for Trust staff

Greater knowledge of mortuary & bereavement services

Assurance of being an extension of patient care and facilities

Improvement of the level of dignity to patients

Feedback in various formats now recorded (verbal feedback now included)

### Background

A new bereavement team came into post in the trust and felt that the service lacked sufficient sensitivity to the needs of the bereaved.

They recognised that there was very little feedback, good or bad, received and therefore they could not gauge what relatives expected from their service.

They also felt that other staff working within the trust probably had little understanding of what went on beyond the mortuary doors. They were determined to make a difference!

### Aims

- To develop a quality bereavement service responsive to need
- To raise the profile and understanding of the service provided
- To implement small changes with large positive impact

### How?

- Development of staff awareness and education session linked to the recently launched Trust End of Life Skillset Challenge
- Review of feedback methods and implementation of a data capture exercise
- Reflection on the wished for departmental changes



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