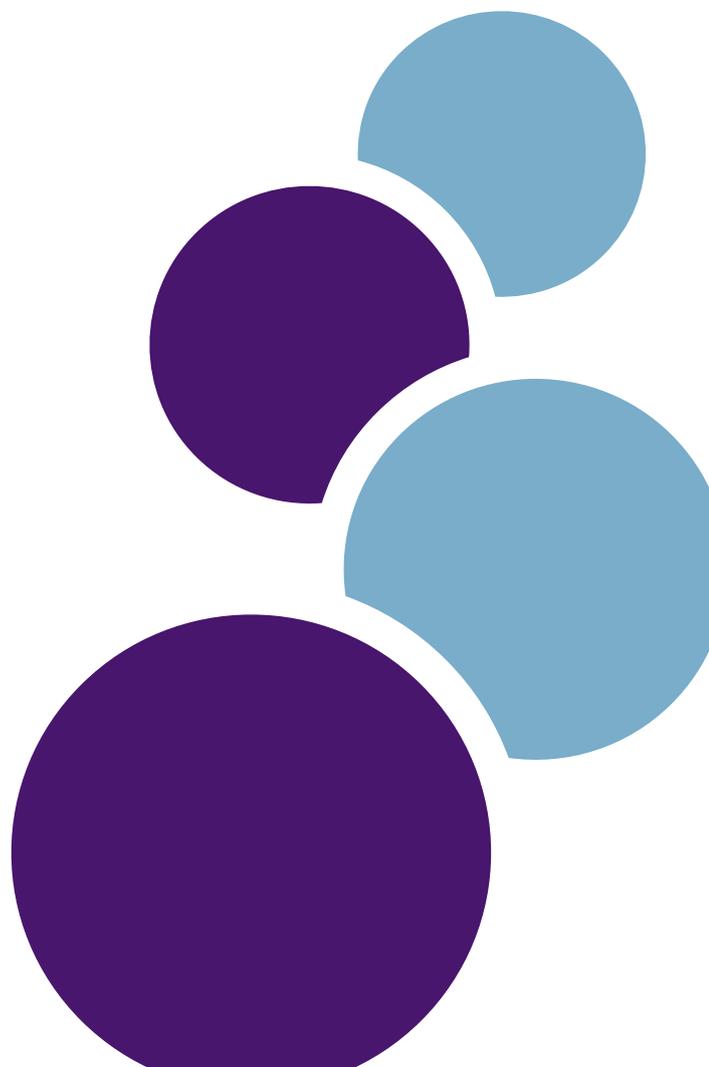


HTA guidelines: filming or photographing a post-mortem

Issued: November 2016



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What is the Human Tissue Authority?

1. The Human Tissue Authority (HTA) is a statutory regulator established in 2005 to oversee compliance with the [Human Tissue Act 2004 \(HT Act\)](#). We license organisations that remove, store and use human bodies and tissues for certain purposes. We aim to maintain public confidence that human tissue and organs are used safely, ethically, and with proper consent, which is a fundamental principle of the HT Act.
2. We often receive enquiries about filming or taking photographs of activities that we regulate or that take place on HTA-licensed premises, for example:
 - different parts of the living donation process;
 - the use of donated bodies for training in medical schools or surgical training centres;
 - post mortem examinations in mortuaries;
 - organ transplants in hospitals.
3. When we refer to photography and filming in this guidance, we intend to capture any recorded, still or live-images, regardless of how they are shown.
4. This guidance is for anyone considering filming or taking photographs of a post-mortem examination or activities taking place within a mortuary setting. This might include staff from these centres or journalists. Further detail can be found in our [Codes of Practice](#) or on our [website](#).

What is the HTA's role in post-mortem examinations?

5. The HTA licenses and inspects all hospital and local authority mortuaries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland where post-mortem examinations take place. We set standards on all aspects of mortuary practice and make sure that mortuaries operate to these standards. In particular we make sure that the deceased and their family are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity.

6. Each HTA licensed establishment has to nominate a person, the Designated Individual (DI), under whose supervision the licensed activities take place. Under the HT Act, the DI's responsibilities include ensuring that suitable people are carrying out the licensed activities and that they are using suitable practices. They are also responsible for ensuring that there are procedures in place governing access by any visitors to the mortuary.
7. DIs usually contact the HTA if they are approached by anyone wishing to film or photograph activities taking place and we encourage them to do so.

Filming or photographing a post-mortem examination

8. We recognise the importance of images in education, and while the making and displaying of images (including photographs, films and electronic images) fall outside of the scope of the HT Act, and cannot be formally regulated, we expect establishments to take care not to compromise the dignity of the deceased, and to put systems in place to prevent the inappropriate use of images.
9. We consider it important to seek prior consent in respect of any filming, photography and use of such footage (including publication, live-streaming or subsequent broadcast). Ideally, consent should be sought from an individual before they die. If this has not happened, permission should be sought from family members or relatives. Where the Coroner has an interest in the case, their agreement must be obtained for the filming to take place.
10. The anonymity of the deceased should be maintained, unless consent has been given for their identity to be made public.
11. In the spirit of the consent that must be given for activities covered by the HT Act, we advise that filming is not contrary to the consent given by the individual or their family, and that the deceased and their family are treated with dignity and respect.
12. The information in our Codes or Practice on [Consent](#) and [Post Mortem Examinations](#) can help ensure that the individual person and their family are given due consideration throughout the process of filming or photographing. The General Medical Council's (GMC) publication '[Making and using visual and audio recordings of patients](#)' may also be a useful resource

Please note:

Consideration should be given to the rights of any other individuals whose personal information is photographed or filmed at the same time as footage is taken of the body or body part (e.g. the images or voices of people who are present at a post mortem examination).

It remains the responsibility of the person or organisation who collects and uses such personal information to respect the rights of any individuals involved, and to comply with applicable laws regarding the collection and use of such information, including data protection laws.

You can also speak to the HTA for further information; please [contact our press office](#) (0207 269 1912).