

Ms Elizabeth Gray
Area Coroner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

16 December 2025

Dear Ms Gray

Re: Correspondence from Coroner's Service - Regulation 28 report - Benedict BLYTHE

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future deaths following the inquest into the death of Benedict Blythe on 1 December 2021. We would like to extend our condolences for the family of Benedict and their loss. I am responding on behalf [REDACTED], Chair of the Prenatal, Perinatal and Paediatric Pathology Special Advisory Committee of the Royal College of Pathologists. Please see the response below:

The Kennedy Protocol has not been formally updated since 2016 it is not known when or if the protocol is to be revised. Since then Autopsy guidelines have been published on sudden unexpected death in fancy and childhood in 2023 under the remit of the Death Investigation Committee at the Royal College of Pathologists and these have superseded the 2016 publication. Neither the 2016 or 2023 guidelines included samples in cases of suspected anaphylaxis. However, the RCPa published autopsy guidelines on autopsies for suspected acute anaphylaxis (includes anaphylactic shock and anaphylactic asthma) in 2018. This document does include very specific guidance of sampling blood and stomach contents in such cases together with caveats for interpreting mast cell tryptase levels.

Although the Paediatric guidelines do not currently include specific details regarding anaphylactic cases, it is expected that autopsy pathologists would be aware of and use other relevant autopsy guidance as indicated by the case being undertaken.

There are guidelines published by the RCPa for anaphylaxis (referenced below) of note; IgE is not specifically referenced in any of the documents and this will be queried with the authors of the relevant guideline to be included in an updated version. The reference below was published after the guideline was written.

Early blood sampling is indicated but timing may be determined by the local post-mortem HTA 2004 arrangements in individual hospitals. In addition, it is extremely difficult to obtain femoral vessel blood samples in very young children purely due to the size of the individual and blood may



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have to be obtained from other sites such as the ventricles of the heart which can be problematic for interpretation of mast cell tryptase levels.

In all Coronal post-mortem examinations in children, tissue samples are taken primarily in accordance with the published protocols and also any that are relevant to ascertaining the cause of death. Retention of samples is determined initially by the Coroner requesting the post-mortem examination and thereafter by parental / next-of-kin consent in line with the Human Tissue Act 2004.

If a death due to anaphylaxis is suspected, this should be raised by the initial referring medical practitioner to the Coroner's officer or by the police. The case to which the Coroner's queries are raised should have anaphylaxis or allergic reaction in the potential cause of death or in the deceased's situational history before the pathologist was contacted. It is usual practice for the autopsy pathologist to communicate a suspected cause of death to the Coroner after the initial examination pending the results of further investigations, however, it is not always possible for a pathologist to be definite at that stage.

In summary: Post-mortem guidelines are in place for allergic / anaphylactic deaths. IgE is not currently in the protocol and this will be raised with the author group of the relevant autopsy guideline. Likewise, including a cross-reference to other autopsy guidelines will be raised with the author group of the paediatric autopsy guidelines.


Consultant Paediatric and Perinatal Pathologist. Chair of the Prenatal, Perinatal and Paediatric Specialty Advisory Committee, Royal College of Pathologists.
9th December 2025

References:

Kennedy protocol, 2e 2016: <https://www.rcpath.org/static/874ae50e-c754-4933-995a804e0ef728a4/Sudden-unexpected-death-in-infancy-and-childhood-2e.pdf>

Sudden unexpected death in infancy, 2023: <https://www.rcpath.org/static/57243bdd-ee48-40ca-8199540e77b29892/G191-SUDIC.pdf>

Autopsy in Anaphylaxis, 2018: <https://www.rcpath.org/static/47841b6b-891f-450a-b968889ff3e0a7d1/G170-DRAFT-Guidelines-on-autopsy-practice-autopsy-for-suspected-acute-anaphalaxis-For-Consultation.pdf>

Confirming anaphylaxis post-mortem using serological tests, 2020:
<https://jcp.bmj.com/content/jclinpath/73/12/781.full.pdf>

Post-mortem tryptase: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0379073820302772>

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention and please reach out if you need any further information.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Senior Professional Guidelines Officer

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]