

Medical Examiner System (MES) and Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) Overview

Document History

Title	Version	Date	Author / Contributor
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Project Mandate

NHSBSA was commissioned by Department of Health Social Care (DHSC) to administer the Medical Examiner System and to digitise the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD).

Timeline of events

Reasons for change

- Existing death certification arrangements were confusing and provided inadequate safeguards
- No mechanism for the NHS to identify trends, take action and learn lessons
- **Shipman Inquiry** - Third report published in 2003
Dr Harold Shipman concealed his wilful malpractice and killed many patients
- **Report of the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry –Vol 2** – published 2013
Inquiries into deaths and practices at [Mid Staffordshire](#) and [Southern Health NHS Foundation Trusts](#) revealed that improved reporting and investigations could have prevented many unnecessary deaths
- **Morecambe Bay Investigation** – report published 2015
- **Consultation on the Introduction of Medical Examiners Death Certification Reform in England and Wales** – published June 2016

Result of change

- Introduction of Medical Examiners via the following Acts of Parliament / Bills
- Coroners and Justice Act 2009 – medical examiners in primary care trusts
- Health and Social Care Act 2012 – medical examiners in local authorities
- Health and Social Care Bill 2021 – make changes to Health and Social Care Act 2012

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-death-certification-process/an-overview-of-the-death-certification-reforms>

Death Certification Reform

There are two strands to the Death Certification Reform Programme

- Medical Examiners (ME) – Manage your case load
 - The 'main' Medical Examiners service
 - Accessed by MEs and MEOs
 - When statutory will be used for all non-coronial deaths
- Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)
 - Used by doctors in all settings to confirm the cause of death
 - If coroner is involved different forms used
 - Once ME service is statutory the Cause of Death will have to have been agreed with an ME

Proposed Benefits

1. Secure and robust system designed around the users that will help streamline the Medical Examiner workflow and enable reporting. This will help DHSC realise the policy intent on scrutiny of death certification.
2. By digitising the MCCD, this will vastly improve efficiency and support the bereaved. This will remove the need for the bereaved to transport the MCCD in a sealed envelope to the registrar in person as it will be completed by electronic transfer.

Medical Examiner System

- The Government introduced Medical Examiners from April 2019 to scrutinise all non-coronial deaths.
- The introduction of medical examiners will:
 - improve the quality and accuracy of the medical certificate of cause of death
 - improve the national data on avoidable mortality and patient safety.
 - increase transparency and offer the bereaved the opportunity to raise concerns
 - provide new levels of scrutiny to help deter criminal activity and poor practice.
- Medical Examiners will be employed in the NHS, with a separate professional line of accountability, allowing for information access in the sensitive & urgent timescales surrounding death registration.
- Medical Examiners will report matters of a clinical governance nature. This will support local learning and help to determine changes to practice and procedures.

More information:

- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/establishing-medical-examiner-system-nhs/#introduction-to-the-medical-examiner-system>
- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/establishing-medical-examiner-system-nhs/>

Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)

When a person dies, the Attending Practitioner (AP) who is a registered medical practitioner that attended the deceased before his or her death' prepares a certificate stating the cause of death. This is known as the MCCD.

Pre-Covid, the MCCD was sent to the LRS (Local Registry Service) for Death Registration by post.

Death registration is 5 days from the date of death

Covid: Emergency legislation enacted to allow the MCCD to be scanned or photographed and emailed to the LRS for registration. Also provided for any medical practitioner with GMC registration to sign the MCCD if the medical practitioner who attended is unable to sign the MCCD or it is impractical for them to do so

MCCD Statutes

- MCCD was enacted in Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/1-2/20/section/22>
- Coroners and Justice Act 2009
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/section/20>
- Coronavirus Act 2020 SCHEDULE 13 PART 1 Paragraph 4
<https://nwssp.nhs.wales/covid-19-information/covid-19-death-certification-central-hub1/mccd-and-cremation-form-4/>

The following MCCD forms will be digitised

- Form 66 English (Over 28 days death)
- Form 65 English (Under 28 days death)
- Bilingual (Over 28 days death) English and Welsh
- Bilingual (Under 28 days death) English and Welsh