

Registration of deaths

Update on registration of deaths and advice from the West Yorkshire Coroner

Information correct on Friday 27 March 2020

Death certificates – new process to enable telephone registration of death

We've received the following update from the registrar's office, we've noted some of your queries on death certificates and are awaiting a response from the registrar's office.

The registrar's service is expecting that the government will introduce the emergency measures to enable telephone registrations of deaths at the end of the week.

In anticipation, therefore, please could GP surgeries no longer issue the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death to a family member but now start to scan and email the MCCD (without the stub section) to the registrar's office at Register.headoffice@leeds.gov.uk

Please include name and contact details for the person who will be registering the death as well as (if known) the name of the funeral director.

As previously mentioned, this will enable the registrar to make contact with the family and register the death by phone from Monday as well as forward documents to the funeral director. If there is no scanned copy of the MCCD, there could be a significant delay in the registration process and would involve family members having to hand deliver or post the MCCD to the registrar.

We have also received a further update regarding certification and whether a doctor has seen a patients within 14 days.

The same process will apply but the timescale has been extended to 28 days, as below:

- amend who can sign a medical certificate of cause of death, enabling a doctor who may not have seen the deceased to certify the cause of death without the death being referred to the coroner;
- relax the requirement, in England and Wales, for a death to be reported to the coroner if the certifying doctor has not seen the deceased after death or within 14 days before death, so that the death need not be reported to the coroner if a doctor, and not just the one certifying the cause of death, has seen the deceased after death or within an extended period of 28 days before death

**Further update from West Yorkshire Senior Coroner sent to Dr Raj Sathiyaseelan, LMC
Medical Secretary**

In the difficult circumstances prevailing during the coronavirus pandemic, the measures suggested by your GPs appear to me to be understandable and proportionate. **I have no objection to the suggestion to reduce infection risks and speed up reporting and authorising procedures that video links will be used to complete cremation forms, provided that any suspicious or unusual aspects would trigger a reversion to the previous procedures.** I would expect this arrangement to cease once the current emergency has passed.

In the hope it avoids unnecessary reporting of deaths to the Coroner **let me also emphasise that deaths attributable to Covid 19 are not reportable to the Coroner as they are regarded as a natural cause of death**, notwithstanding that they are reportable to Public Health England.

It may help your members to know that **I have adjourned all inquest hearings until 5 June (and will review the position again nearer that date).** This means that **no clinicians will be called to attend court over coming weeks.** We are endeavouring to continue opening Inquests so that bodies can be released for funeral where appropriate. We will also hear inquests where the evidence can be admitted in documentary form and the family have indicated they do not wish to attend the hearing.

Would you agree that a telephone consultation or video consultation with a patient before their death is sufficient to count as seeing the patient prior to death? Yes I would regard a telephone/video consultation as sufficient. Similarly, if a GP's advanced nurse practitioner had seen a patient in the course of treatment for a chronic condition, then their entry in the medical records may well constitute a consultation by the GP's team for current purposes.