**Death Certification and the Coroner**

Confirmation/verification of death is different from certification of death

There is no legal, contractual or professional requirement for a doctor to confirm death. Although this would generally be considered good practice, we are in unprecedented times. Staff in nursing and residential homes and even family members should be able to provide a doctor with sufficient information for a doctor to pronounce the person is dead. The funeral director can then be called to remove the body

The Derbyshire Coroner has given the following advice regarding patients who die at home with suspected COVID-19

If someone dies at home following a presumptive diagnosis of COVID-19 i.e. fits the case definition but no confirmatory swab, they may or may not have been seen by a HCW. All cases will be referred to the coroner who arranges transport to the mortuary. Each patient is swabbed. If COVID-19 positive, the coroner will issue a death certificate. If COVID-19 negative, there will likely be a post-mortem.

This is the current guidance. This may well change in the coming weeks

A bill is currently going through parliament to modify the laws on death certification, the changes will:

* mean a coroner is only to be notified where a doctor believes there is no medical practitioner who may sign the death certificate, or that they are not available within a reasonable time of the death
* expand the list of people who can register a death to include funeral directors acting on behalf of the family
* enable electronic transmission of documents that currently must be physically presented in order to certify the registration of a death
* remove the need for a second confirmatory medical certificate for a cremation to take place
* remove the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 requirement that any inquest into a COVID-19 death must be held with a jury. Other notifiable diseases will still require an inquest with a jury