



LMC UPDATE: DEATH VERIFICATION CERTIFICATION AND CREMATORIUM FORMS

DEATH VERIFICATION:

There is:

- NO requirement for a death to be verified by a doctor.
- NO requirement for the body of the deceased to be examined by a doctor
- NO contractual obligation on GPs to verify death or examine the body. do these

We advise against GPs verifying in person the death of suspected COVID-19 patients.

The Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 states deaths may be verified by:

- (a) any relative of the deceased person present at the death or in attendance during his last illness ;
- (b) any other relative of the deceased residing or being in the sub-district where the death occurred;
- (c) any person present at the death ;
- (d) the occupier of the house if he knew of the happening of the death;
- (e) any inmate of the house who knew of the happening of the death;
- (f) the person causing the disposal of the body.

DEATH CERTIFICATION:

We have discussed with the Derbyshire Coroner's Office and they are likely to be under unprecedented strain during this pandemic, so post-mortems are being avoided unless absolutely necessary (due to infection control and workload). We agree that every effort should be made to give the most likely cause of death. The Coronavirus Act 2020 and local interpretation has amended procedures as follows:

- You do NOT need to report confirmed COVID-19 deaths to the coroner, but you must report the case to PHE in the usual way.
- For suspected COVID-19 deaths, any doctor may complete a medical certificate of cause of death providing they can give a cause (to the best of their knowledge), although we recommend that you discuss with the Coroner first as the local process is being discussed. Previously, all suspected COVID-19 deaths had to be reported and removed to the mortuary for swabbing but the increasing numbers are prompting a review – hence the advice above.
- **It is acceptable to qualify mention of Covid-19 with words such as 'possibly' or 'probably' indicating the absence of a positive virology test or some ambiguity in clinical presentation, and such qualifiers do not in themselves imply sufficient doubt on the cause of death to require referral to a coroner.**
- Certificate can be issued if **any** doctor has seen the patient (including via videolink) in the preceding 28 days (rather than 14 days which was required previously)
- Certificate can be filled in, signed, scanned and sent to the registrar electronically either by the person collecting it from the practice or direct via the GP. (If sent by GP please keep the original copy for later distribution.

CREMATION FORMS:

The GRO has mandated that (while it is acceptable for consultation before death) videolink is not acceptable for the examination of the deceased after death. We are urgently trying to get definitive guidance as we strongly advise against GPs examining the body of a deceased patient infected with coronavirus or suspected coronavirus in person due to the risk of infection.

If a GP does complete a Cremation Form 4 we would ask that they are completed legibly and as fully as possible. If you have not examined the deceased simply state in the box after Q8 that you have not seen the body and the reason for this e.g. risk of infection. It is then up to the medical referee to decide whether to accept or reject it.



Form Cremation 4 remains unchanged and a PDF version continues to be available. It can be submitted electronically and an electronic signature includes being sent from the secure email account of the person completing the form Cremation 4.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 has removed the need for a confirmatory (Form 5) medical certificate.