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Coronavirus Act expiry

Death certification and registration
easements from 25 March 2022

March 2022

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Summary

This document summarises arrangements for death certification and registration after the Coronavirus Act expires on 24 March 2022.

The Coronavirus Act 2020, which introduced easements to death certification processes and cremation forms, expires at midnight on 24 March 2022. Some changes have been retained on a permanent basis through other measures, and other processes revert to previous practice.

The following provisions are continuing after 24 March 2022:

- The period before death within which a doctor completing a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) must have seen a deceased patient will remain 28 days (prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the limit was 14 days).
- It will still be acceptable for medical practitioners to send MCCDs to registrars electronically.
- The government's intention is that the form Cremation 5 will not be re-introduced after the Coronavirus Act expires.

The following emergency provisions are changing with the expiry of the Coronavirus Act on 24 March 2022:

- The provision temporarily allowing any medical practitioner to complete the MCCD, introduced as a temporary measure by the Coronavirus Act, will be discontinued.
- Informants will have to register deaths in person, not remotely.

Detail

1. Medical certificate of cause of death

- a. Only a medical practitioner who has attended the deceased for their last illness will be allowed to complete a MCCD. A medical practitioner with GMC registration will be able to sign the MCCD if they attended the deceased during their final illness up to 28 days before death, or viewed the body in person after death, and can state the cause of death to the best of their knowledge and belief.
 - i. The 28 day provision (the 'last seen alive' requirement), initially introduced in response to the coronavirus pandemic, has now been made permanent through a change to regulations and included in the MCCD guidance. 'Seen' in the context of attendance includes consultation using video technology. However, it does not include consultation by telephone/audio only.
 - ii. Attendance after death (i.e. viewing the body) will need to be in person and includes verifying the death.

It should be noted that the provision for any medical practitioner to complete the MCCD, introduced as a temporary measure by the Coronavirus Act, will be discontinued when the Act expires at midnight on 24 March 2022.

- b. Requirements are different if the medical practitioner did not attend the deceased in the 28 days before death, or the deceased was not seen after death by the medical practitioner. After 24 March 2022, the MCCD can still be completed by the medical practitioner if they can state the cause of death to the best of their knowledge and belief, but this will require coroner notification at registration, or preferably by the medical practitioner beforehand to avoid distress to the bereaved. The coroner may then complete Form 100A and send this to the registrar to allow registration.
- c. Similarly, if no medical practitioner can state the cause of death to the best of their knowledge and belief, the coroner will have to be notified. It would then be for the coroner to determine the cause of death.

- d. The MCCD can be scanned or photographed and sent from a secure email account to registrars as an attachment. Registrars should determine the appropriate email address to which the MCCD is sent – for example, a secure email account. It is important that a qualified informant is aware the MCCD has been completed.

2. Registration

- a. As noted in 1(d), MCCDs can continue to be scanned or photographed and sent by email to registrars as an attachment. We continue to recommend that electronic transfer of MCCDs is used as standard practice to accelerate processes. However the next of kin/informant will need to register the death in person.
- b. Where electronic transfer is not possible, a paper MCCD can still be issued to a qualified informant for them to deliver to the registrar.
- c. An informant can be someone who is closely related; who was present at the death; a hospital official; or someone who is arranging the funeral (i.e. someone who is instructing the funeral director).

3. Coroners

- a. The Chief Coroner has provided [information on the law for coroners](#) (see guidance sheet No. 34).

4. Burial

Where an urgent burial is required it may be possible for the registrar to issue the required form (the green form) prior to registration. This is subject to certain provisions being met, and is offered by some registrars as an out-of-hours service. It is expected that the registration will take place as soon as possible after the green form has been issued. The coroner can also issue similar documents subject to certain conditions. The National Medical Examiner has published information about how [urgent release of bodies](#) can be facilitated.

5. Cremation

- a. The requirement to complete a confirmatory medical certificate (form cremation 5) was temporarily removed by the Coronavirus Act which expires on 24 March 2022. It is the government's intention that it will not be re-introduced after the expiry date. Unless otherwise notified, cremations can continue to be authorised on the basis of one medical certificate (form Cremation 4), without the requirement to also complete form Cremation 5.
- b. A medical practitioner will be able to complete the form [Cremation 4](#) if they attended the deceased (including visual/video consultation) within 28 days before death, or viewed the body in person after death (including for verification). The requirements will therefore be the same as those for the MCCD. The form is an interactive PDF document and can be completed and saved before sending, or paper copies can be scanned/photographed and submitted electronically. Electronic signature includes being sent from the secure email account of the person completing the form Cremation 4.
- c. The form Cremation 10 will continue to be completed by the crematorium medical referee.

Contact details TBC
