

Medical Examiners and Death Registration

This information is here to help you understand some of the process and contact that will happen following your recent bereavement.

The ME (Medical Examiner Service) **has** a legal duty to independently review all deaths that are not investigated by the coroner.

This service will give you the opportunity to discuss any related concerns you may have.

Medical Examiners Service

Who are medical examiners and medical examiner officers?

Since 2019 senior NHS doctors have had the opportunity to receive specialist training and spend some of their time working as medical examiners. In the immediate period before a death is registered (five days) medical examiners independently scrutinise the causes of death given by the attending practitioner. Alongside other specially trained staff, their job is to give independent advice into causes of deaths, except for deaths which have to be reviewed by a coroner.

Medical examiners and their officers offer families and carers an opportunity to raise questions or concerns about the cause of death of a loved one or about the care they received beforehand. This will usually be done over a telephone call. They can help explain medical language to make it easier to understand. Medical examiners also look at the relevant medical records and discuss the causes of death with the doctor filling in the official form - this is called the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD).

Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) is a legal document issued by a doctor who knows the cause of death and was involved in the care of the deceased. This could mean sometimes an unavoidable wait for the certificate, for example, if the relevant doctor concerned is not available for whatever reason.

If the doctor is required to get approval of a cause of death from the coroner, this can also cause a delay. Until the cause of death is approved by the coroner the doctor will not have permission to issue it.

Once the MCCD has been completed, you will be contacted by the Medical Examiner's Office who will explain what is on the MCCD. They will ask if you have any concerns or questions about the care that the person who died received.

The MCCD will be scanned by the GP Practice or Hospice and sent directly to the Registration Office electronically.

Coroners

Some deaths must legally be notified to the coroner, and the medical examiner service will explain to the family, if this is required.

When the coroner starts an investigation, they will investigate the death independently - although the medical examiner may still provide expert medical advice to the coroner.

What questions will I be asked?

The medical examiner or their staff will explain what is written on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death, they will provide further clarity if required, and will ask if you have any questions or concerns about the care the person received before their death. This is the best time for you to raise questions and speak about anything that concerns you. They will also pass on praise or compliments to the appropriate teams/individuals.

Why am I being asked if I have any concerns?

A discussion with an independent medical examiner provides you with an opportunity to have an open and honest conversation and address any worries or concerns, with someone who was not involved in providing care to the person who died. Medical examiners and their staff will discuss your thoughts, questions and concerns and if they find issues with care that need further investigation, will refer these on to someone who can investigate further.

It could be as simple as helping you to understand more about the treatment and cause/s of death or to understand the medical language used. There may be something about the care which you think did not feel right. As well as answering your questions this can help us to provide better care for patients, their families and carers by recognising ways in which care can be improved in the future.

Can I nominate someone else to talk if it's too difficult for me?

Yes, the medical examiner may contact you to ask who you would like us to talk to instead, or you can let the medical team know if you would rather appoint someone else as a first point of contact. We understand this is a difficult time for many people and so speaking to the medical examiner is completely your choice.

What will happen if something was not right?

The medical examiner and their staff are here to listen to your questions and concerns, provide answers if possible and, if necessary, pass them on to someone who can investigate further. Medical examiners will not investigate further themselves, as they must complete their work within set time limits for the death certification process, but they will make sure that the correct process relevant to your concerns is commenced.

Will funeral plans or release of the body take longer?

We make every effort to avoid any delays and work with families to meet the legal requirements for registering deaths. We try to be flexible, for example where relatives need release of the body quickly.

How can I contact the medical examiner office?

You can contact the medical examiner office either by phone or email:

Telephone: 01254 735673 or Email: elht.elme@nhs.net

The opening hours are 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday.

Registration of death

There are two registration offices:

Deaths in Blackburn with Darwen:

Once the Registrars have received the MCCD and next of kin details from the GP or Hospice, the registrar will make contact and arrange a time for the registration to take place in person at the Registration Office in Blackburn town hall.

Deaths in Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Rossendale and Ribble Valley

Lancashire County Council offers the option to book an appointment via their online registration portal <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/births-marriages-and-deaths/deaths/register-a-death/>.

The GP or Hospice will send the MCCD and next of kin details to the Registrar. Once this has been received and the next of kin has provided their details via the online portal, arrangements will be made for registration in person at one of the local registration offices.

For those who do not have internet access, the next of kin can call their local registration office on 0300 123 6705.

Please note unless the death has been referred to the Coroner, it is a legal requirement to register the death within 5 days

The Registration Office will also transfer the form for burial or cremation ('the Green form') from the Registrar to the relevant authority.

A death certificate is a copy of the certified entry of the death in the register. You may need additional certified copies of the certificate for banks, building societies, solicitors or pension/insurance claims. There is a charge for each death certificate. The Registration Office will ask for payment during your appointment; you may find it useful to have a payment card available when you speak to them.

The Registrar will be able to advise on the possible number of copies needed but there will be a charge for each copy of the death certificate that you may require.

The Registrar will need the following information about the person who died:

- Date and Place of Death
- Date and Place of Birth
- The full names and any other names of the person who has died (including any maiden surnames if this applies)
- Their occupation
- The usual address of the person who has died
- Whether the deceased was in receipt of a pension or allowance from public funds
- The full name of his/her husband/wife/civil partner and their occupation
- If the deceased was married or in a civil relationship, the date of birth of the surviving spouse or civil partner