



INFORMATION AND ADVICE REGARDING YOUR RECENT BEREAVEMENT

Doctors issuing the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

When a person dies in Scotland they cannot be buried or cremated without a medical certificate, known as the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD), giving a cause of death. This certificate must be completed by a Doctor

In some instances of non-suspicious death the GP or hospital doctor may be prepared to issue the MCCD. Details of how to obtain the MCCD and complete the necessary registration arrangements are detailed below. This process has recently been altered to ensure minimal in-person contact in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Investigation into Deaths and the role of the Procurator Fiscal

It is the duty of the Procurator Fiscal to enquire into all sudden, suspicious, accidental and unexplained deaths. This may mean the Procurator Fiscal becoming involved in some non-suspicious deaths where the GP or hospital doctor is unable to issue the MCCD, or requires to consult with the Procurator Fiscal prior to issuing the certificate. In such instances deaths can be reported to the Procurator Fiscal by either a doctor or Police Scotland.

Having assessed the circumstances of the death the Procurator Fiscal, if satisfied with the circumstances reported to them, may then allow the doctor to issue the certificate, eliminating the need for a post mortem examination.

During the COVID-19 pandemic any deaths which occur in the community (outside of a hospital) regarding which a GP feels unable to provide an MCCD, will be reported to the Procurator Fiscal by Police Scotland. The Procurator Fiscal will thereafter make an assessment as to whether or not a death certificate can be issued or whether a post mortem examination will be required.

In all other cases of sudden, suspicious, accidental or non-suspicious deaths where the GP or hospital doctor is unable to issue the MCCD, the Procurator Fiscal will instruct a post mortem examination to establish the cause of death.

On completion of the post mortem examination, the pathologist will issue the MCCD and the next of kin will be informed by the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit (SFIU) or the police (depending on each individual case).

MCCD issued by the Pathologist

When the MCCD has been issued following a post mortem examination, arrangements can then be made for a funeral director to collect the deceased along with the MCCD from the mortuary.

Registration of Death

By law all deaths occurring in Scotland must be registered by a Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The duty to provide the particulars for registration rest principally with a relative of the deceased. However if no such relative is available, the duty may be performed by any person present at death, the deceased's executor or other legal representative, or the occupier of the premises where the death took place.

To prevent unnecessary personal contact which might spread COVID-19, registration offices are currently closed to members of the public and the process of registration of deaths remotely is now operating across Scotland.

The doctor providing the MCCD will ask the person who will be making funeral arrangements which registration office they intend to use. The doctor will then send a copy of the MCCD to the registrar electronically, copying in the person making the arrangements.

Once the doctor has confirmed that the MCCD has been sent to the registrar, the person registering the death should contact the registrar by telephone or email to arrange the death registration process.

Details of your local registration office can be found online

Any death, which occurs in Scotland, must be registered in Scotland, even if the funeral is to be held out with Scotland. Deaths can be registered at any registration office in Scotland.

The Registrar will:

- Ask for contact details from the person registering the death, including a telephone number and/or email address
- Ask for information about the deceased's birth and any marriage(s) in order to conduct checks on the Scottish Family History System
- If any relevant life events for the deceased person took place outside Scotland, the registrar will ask if the informant has documents they could scan or photograph and e-mail to the office to assist in gathering appropriate information. These documents should be in English or accompanied by a translation into English.

What happens after registration?

The person registering the death will be asked which funeral director will be dealing with funeral arrangements.

A scanned copy of the Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14) can be emailed directly to the funeral director to allow funeral arrangements to be made. Alternatively Form 14 can be emailed to the person registering the death if a funeral director has not been appointed.

An abbreviated death extract and copy of the Registration Privacy Notice will be posted to the person registering the death. A full death extract can be purchased for a statutory fee of £10 per copy (payable by card over the phone).

Tell Us Once Service

This service is used by the registrar to notify government departments, including department for Work and Pensions and council services of the death. The registrar will notify the appropriate departments on your behalf.

During the period of the COVID 19 pandemic, the registration process may involve multiple contacts between registrar and the person registering the death before it is completed. The registrar will always do their best to make the process as swift and straightforward as possible in the current circumstances.

More information can be found at

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/registration/registration-services>

Bereavement Support

Cruse Bereavement Care-
Support Helpline 0845 600 2227
www.crusescotland.org.uk

Breathing Space
0800 838587
www.breathingspace.scot

Samaritans
Call 116 123
www.samaritans.org

British Humanist Association

Has a network of accredited funeral officiants who can help to plan and conduct a non-religious funeral ceremony.
www.humanism.org.uk

National Association of Funeral Directors

Advice, a code of practice and addresses for people planning a funeral or looking for a funeral director.
www.nafd.org.uk/

Down to Earth
Can assist with funeral advice and how to reduce costs and obtain government support.
0208 983 5055
Email: downtoearth@qsa.org.uk

National Records of Scotland (Formerly the General Registrar Office (Scotland) -GROS
<http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/>

