



Ministry of  
**JUSTICE**

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To all crematorium medical referees  
in England and Wales

[www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

14 June 2012

Dear Medical Referee,

### **Department of Health Medical Examiner system and death certification reforms**

I am writing further to my letter to all crematorium medical referees of 24 May 2011, in which I advised of a change to the timetable for the Department of Health's (DH) implementation of the death certifications reforms contained in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. As you may recall, the planned reforms include the introduction of a system of medical examiners who will consider all deaths, and this change will necessitate corresponding changes to the existing cremation legislation, bringing to an end the current system of medical certification in support of applications for cremation, including the role of medical referee.

In April this year DH advised that there is a further change to the timetable for implementation of the planned reforms; this is now set for **April 2014**. Further information can be found on the DH website via this link: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/04/death-certification-reforms/>

I am writing so as to ensure that you are aware of this change, since of course it affects everyone who is working as a medical referee in England and Wales. I understand that DH intends to consult later this year on the planned secondary legislation which will be required to implement the death certification reforms. This Department will consult some months afterwards on the planned changes to cremation legislation; you would be very welcome to respond to that consultation.

We will ensure that you are kept informed. In the meantime, as always, my team will be pleased to respond to any queries about the Cremation Regulations.

Yours faithfully

**Judith Bernstein**

Head of Coroners, Burials, Cremation and Inquiries Policy Team