



Department
of Health

DEATH CERTIFICATION REFORMS: SUMMARY UPDATE, OCTOBER 2013

The Government remains firmly committed to reform of the death certification system, in particular the introduction of the role of medical examiner. The reports of Robert Francis and others are clear on their importance, and the potential benefits are borne out by the experience of the pilot sites for the reforms.

This must mean that every death receives an appropriate and (at least) adequate level of scrutiny, regardless of the method of disposal of the body – this might mean certain core features of scrutiny in every case (e.g. a conversation with the family of the deceased) but with discretion for medical examiners to do whatever else seems to them to be needed.

The Government is also anxious to avoid placing new financial burdens on individuals at a difficult time in their lives.

At the same time, we must also minimise any new demands on public funding arising from the reforms and ensure no new financial burdens for local authorities. This means we must agree a realistic and transparent assessment of the costs involved with colleagues in Wales, DCLG, MoJ, the LGA and others.

We are working closely and constructively with key stakeholders and colleagues across government to resolve all this. We will publish a comprehensive consultation document as soon as our proposals are finalised – we hope this to be by the end of 2013. We intend the consultation to run for the full 12 week period.

The Government has committed to implementation of the reforms in October 2014. We realise that this date is now under severe pressure and will continue to be informed on this by our partners in implementation. We will be able to say more when we publish the consultation document.

We are considering various options for the collection of the fee and again will say more in the consultation document.