



Ministry of  
**JUSTICE**

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To all crematorium medical referees and cremation  
authorities in England and Wales

19 November 2014

Dear colleagues

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

I am writing, further to my letter of 10 July 2013 to ensure that you are aware of a further update to the timetable for implementation of the Department of Health's (DH) death certification reforms included in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

We have recently been advised by the Secretary of State for Health that whilst his department remains committed to introducing a new system of death certification, further work on implementation has been delayed until after the General Election in May 2015.

The DH has delayed this work in order to reconsider the detail of the medical examiner system in the light of other positive developments on patient safety since 2010. These are detailed in the attached update from the Health Secretary to the Health Select Committee, which DH has permitted me to share with you.

As you may recall from my earlier communications, the new system will include a medical examiner in every local authority area who will scrutinise all deaths which are not investigated by a coroner. The new system will require corresponding changes to current cremation legislation, and the present system of medical certification for cremations, including the role of crematorium medical referee, will come to an end.

We are sorry for any inconvenience this delay may cause. We would advise those of you who require revalidation as medical practitioners to contact the General Medical Council so that you are eligible to continue in post.

My team will as always be glad to respond to any day to day queries about the Cremation Regulations.

Yours faithfully

**Judith Bernstein**

Head of Coroners, Burials, Cremation and Inquiries Policy Team