



Department of Health

Death Certification Reforms in England and Wales

1. A new system of death certification, (excluding coroner cases) involving medical examiners scrutinising cause(s) of death as stated by a doctor, was planned to go live in October 2014. The nature of the process would detect patient safeguarding issues.
2. While we remain fully committed to these reforms, we have delayed further work on implementation until after the forthcoming general election in order to reconsider the detail of the medical examiner system in the light of the other positive developments on patient safety since 2010. These include:
 - The appointments of Sir Mike Richards, Chief Inspector of Hospitals and Andrea Sutcliffe, Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care to look at services for safety and quality.
 - **Patient Safety Fellows** – work is underway to create a group of 5,000 respected, enthusiastic and effective safety improvers who will become the backbone of patient safety improvement over the coming decade, making an active contribution to improving safety.
 - **SAFE team** – A new Safety Action for England team will be developed to provide short-term support to individual trusts in the area of patient safety. SAFE will provide trusts with a clinical and managerial resource to help to develop organisational and staff capabilities to help improve the delivery of safe treatment and care.
3. On 16 October 2014, Jeremy Hunt launched a programme to improve the safety of patients and ensure continual learning sits at the heart of healthcare in England. The programme, coordinated by NHS England and NHS Improving Quality (NHS IQ), will be the largest and most comprehensive of its kind in the world.
4. The programme is borne out of Professor Don Berwick's report last year into the safety of patients in England and builds on learning from the Francis and Winterbourne View recommendations. The report, [A Promise to Learn](#) - a commitment to act, made a series of recommendations to improve patient safety, and called for the NHS "to become, more than ever before, a system devoted to continual learning and improvement of patient care".

5. The programme is aligned with and supports the 'Sign up to Safety' campaign, which sets out the Government's ambition to halve avoidable harm over the next three years and save up to 6,000 lives. The Chief Executives of NHS England, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the NHS Trust Development Authority, Monitor, NHS Improving Quality (NHS IQ) and the NHS Litigation Authority (NHS LA) have all signed up to align their work with this campaign.