

## **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

### **GUIDANCE FOR SCOTTISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON THE REGISTRATION OF DEATHS AND STILL-BIRTHS WHEN REGISTRATION OFFICES ARE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC DURING A PANDEMIC**

This guidance concentrates on the delivery of a core service to register deaths and still-births during a COVID-19/pandemic situation, during which for public health reasons it has been agreed that registration offices will close to the public, and registrations not take place in person. It is complementary to wider NRS guidance setting out broad principles on registration as a whole, as well as additional guidance on marriage and civil partnership and birth registration. This guidance should be adapted, as applicable, where it is necessary to register a still-birth.

#### **Receiving an MCCD or Form 6**

Following a request from NRS (and likely reinforced by Scottish Government public health messaging) certifying doctors will be asked to scan and immediately send by e-mail a signed copy of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) or Certificate of Still-birth (Form 6) to the registration office where the informant says they would like to register the death, as well as to the informant themselves.

Certifying doctors will also be asked to put a hard copy in the post, and there may be occasions where the registrar will receive a MCCD/Form 6 by post.

The forms should be stored securely until an informant contacts the office to make arrangements for the registration of the death/still-birth.

#### **Informant contacts the office to make arrangements to have the death/still-birth registered**

Registrars should:

- Take contact details from the informant for their upcoming remote appointment, including a telephone number and/or e-mail address, using a contact sheet along the lines of the template at Annex 4.
- Ask for information about the deceased's birth and marriage(s) in order to look for any entries on the Scottish Family History System prior to the phone appointment.
- If any relevant events took place outside Scotland, ask if the informant has documents they could scan or photograph and e-mail to the office.

If the informant is unwilling to provide contact details to allow a registrar to get in touch with them, they should be advised to contact the office again at a time that suits both them and the registrar.

Contact with informants may be undertaken by telephone or any other electronic means of communication approved by the local authority using devices issued by the council only. (For security reasons, it is not recommended that registrars use their personal phones or other non-work devices to communicate with informants.)

### **Initial advice for the informant**

Registrars should:

- Explain you will use the MCCD/Form 6 and the documents and/or information provided by the informant to complete a Form of Particulars and register page.
- Advise that the registration process may involve multiple contacts before it is complete, but that the aim is to make the registration as straightforward and normal as possible in the current circumstances.
- Explain that during the period where registration offices are closed to the public, the informant will not be asked to attend to sign the register page. Instead they will be asked to tell the registrar the form of their signature, and how it usually reads.
- The registrar completing the death registration will then write the signature in Space 14 of the death register page/Space 13 of the still-birth register page, followed by the phrase "*Transcribed*", indicating that the informant has remotely attested to the page. (Such pages will be regarded as having the same legal force as pages ordinarily signed by the informant in ink.)

### **Complete a Form of Particulars (FoP) on FER**

Complete the FoP as far as possible. (Each registration will have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.)

- In some cases, it may be easier to look for entries on the Scottish Family History System or wait for documents to be sent electronically, then complete the FoP as far as possible before contacting the informant.
- For other registrations, it may be simpler to complete the FoP whilst in ongoing communication with the informant, e.g. by telephone or other remote means of communication.

### **Checking the Form of Particulars**

- Read through the FoP to the informant and ensure that the information gathered is correct.
- If the informant has an e-mail address or other electronic means of communication, the registrar may print a copy of the "Preview" register and write by hand clearly across the top "This page is for checking purposes only". That

preview page may then be sent electronically to the informant for an additional check (see Annex 1).

- **If a 'Preview' register page is sent electronically for checking, please remember that you will be 'timed out' of FER after 30 minutes if you do not keep the session live. If the informant does not reply to your message about the 'Preview' page within 30 minutes, keep the entry live on FER by being active in the entry – e.g. by moving the mouse or putting a short note in the notepad, otherwise you will lose the information previously entered into FER.**

### **Collecting a signature for the register page**

- If a "Preview" page has been sent, once the informant is content that the information it contains is correct, ask them to sign the document and send it back to the office.
- If the information has been gathered solely by telephone, ask the informant what they usually sign (i.e. their full name spelled out, use of initials etc).
- It is important to know how the usual signature reads, as the registrar will be writing that signature on the register page. For example, does the son of the deceased sign James McGregor, Jamie McGregor, J McGregor and so on.
- Go to "Get page for signing" as usual on FER, print and check the register page.
- If content that the page is correct, go to "Transcribe signatures" and insert the informant's signature, followed by "(Transcribed)" (see Annex 2).

### **Issue of documents after registration**

- Ask the informant (if this is not a funeral director) which funeral director will be dealing with funeral arrangements for them.
- If the informant wishes the registrar to do so, arrange to e-mail a scanned copy of the Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14) to the funeral director.
- If the informant does not yet know which funeral director will be making arrangements, or does not wish to provide that information, advise that the Form 14 will be posted out in hard copy to the informant for onward transfer to the keeper of the burial ground or crematorium.
- Arrange to post the abbreviated death extract, any full death extracts purchased and the Registration Privacy Notice to the informant (see Annex 3 for an example full death extract showing the signature of the informant was transcribed).
- If the local authority offers only the Tell Us Once (TUC) 'Capture' service, or if the informant does not wish to give information for TUC following the usual

query about use of this service, advise that a Registration or Notification of Death form (BD8) will be posted out in hard copy to the informant along with the extract(s).

### **After completion of the registration**

- If the informant has requested that the Form 14 be e-mailed to the funeral director, send the document in this way as soon as the registration has been completed, requesting a response confirming receipt.
- After sending the form, mark the name of the funeral directors and the date the Form 14 was e-mailed, **in pencil**, on the paper copy of the Form 14 and keep this form on file **until the register has been examined** – at which point it should be securely destroyed.

Overall, registrars should follow normal registration process with regard to notifying the Procurator Fiscal, Council Tax authorities and the Electoral Registration Officer of the death, as well as sending a death extract to notify any applicable body which administers occupational pensions, or keeps a register of professional members.

### **Review of Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCD)**

Local authorities will be notified in the event that the review of Medical Certificates of Cause of Death is reduced in scale or suspended due to COVID-19.

### **Tell Us Once**

If the informant would like to use TUO, as noted above, take additional information from the informant by phone or whichever electronic, remote means of communication has been used, and complete the TUO process as normal.

It is likely – though not as yet definite – that as, at a certain point, we may need to suspend in-person birth registration for a period of time to facilitate reduced spreading of COVID-19. In this situation, those councils offering the TUO birth service will need to communicate the temporary cessation of that service to customers.

Further guidance on this will be forthcoming as the overall COVID-19 situation develops, and included in guidance on birth registration.

### **Continuity of Service**

The aim of NRS, and local authorities, will be to maintain key registration practice as far as possible.

In instances of reduced staffing, NRS would advise the following steps:

- Review rota and cover arrangements, and assess whether there are former members of registration staff or other appropriately skilled staff working within the authority who could be temporarily re-deployed to assist with registration
- Alternatively, councils may wish to explore mutual aid and support arrangements with neighbouring or other local authorities
- If a former registrar, or registrar from a neighbouring council, comes to work in your district on a temporary basis, a Level 1 user in your council may grant user authority to allow the temporarily appointed person access to FER for your district. (On FER, go in to System, then Grant user authority.) If a Level 1 user is unavailable, contact the FER Support Team so that they may be provided with access to the FER system
- If appointing a former registrar or registrar from a neighbouring council as a temporary member of staff, ensure that an 'Appointment' form (found on FER under 'Manual Forms') is completed and sent both to LOU and the FER Support Team as soon as possible. The authority of the Registrar General for that registrar to work in your district will then be issued (retrospectively, if necessary)
- As a last resort, where all previous steps have been attempted, you may issue a public notice that due to staff sickness, the council cannot offer death/still birth registration services until further notice.

*This page is for checking purposes only.*

(Section 22(1) of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965)

<b>DEATH</b> Registered in the district of TRAINING - Fictional test RD				District No.	Year 2020	Entry No. 0
1. Forename(s) Michael James					2. Sex  M	
Surname(s) McGregor						
3. Occupation Primary School Teacher (retired)						
4. Date of birth	Year 1950	Month 5	Day 16	5. Age 69 years	6. Marital or civil partnership status Divorced	
7. When died 2020 March Eleventh 1234 hours						
8. Where died Royal Infirmary Training TA1 1AT						
9. Usual residence (if different from 8 above) 78 Upper Cross Crescent Training TA9 8RR						
10. Cause of death I (a) Pneumonia (b) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (c) (d) II  Certifying registered medical practitioner Jason Williams						
11. Forename(s), surname(s) and occupation of spouse(s) or civil partner(s) Catherine Morrison, Hospital Laboratory Technician						
12. Forename(s), surname(s) and occupation of father/parent  _____				13. Forename(s), surname(s) and occupation of mother/parent Moira McGregor or Kerr (deceased)		
14. Signature of informant, how qualified to give information and address Son  123 High Street Training TA1 2ER						
15. When registered	Year 2020	Month 3	Day 16	16.  Registrar		
17.						
18.						

Annex 2  
Death register page with transcribed signature

*(Section 22(1) of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965)*

<b>DEATH</b> Registered in the district of TRAINING - Fictional test RD				District No. 890	Year 2020	Entry No. 16
1. Forename(s) Michael James					2. Sex  M	
Surname(s) McGregor						
3. Occupation Primary School Teacher (retired)						
4. Date of birth	Year 1950	Month 5	Day 16	5. Age 69 years	6. Marital or civil partnership status Divorced	
7. When died 2020 March Eleventh 1234 hours						
8. Where died Royal Infirmary Training TA1 1AT						
9. Usual residence (if different from 8 above) 78 Upper Cross Crescent Training TA9 8RR						
10. Cause of death I (a) Pneumonia (b) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (c) (d) II  Certifying registered medical practitioner      Jason Williams						
11. Forename(s), surname(s) and occupation of spouse(s) or civil partner(s) Catherine Morrison, Hospital Laboratory Technician						
12. Forename(s), surname(s) and occupation of father/parent  _____				13. Forename(s), surname(s) and occupation of mother/parent  Moira McGregor or Kerr (deceased)		
14. Signature of informant, how qualified to give information and address Son Jamie Mc Gregor (Transcribed) 123 High Street Training TA1 2ER						
15. When registered	Year 2020	Month 3	Day 16	16. Test Registrar Registrar		
17.						
18.						

Annex 3  
Death extract with transcribed signature

**Extract of an entry in a REGISTER of DEATHS**

**DG**

*(Section 37(2) of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965)*

<b>DEATH</b> Registered in the district of TRAINING - Fictional test RD				District No. 890	Year 2020	Entry No. 16
1. Forename(s) Michael James					2. Sex M	
Surname(s) McGregor						
3. Occupation Primary School Teacher (retired)						
4. Date of birth	Year 1950	Month 5	Day 16	5. Age 69 years	6. Marital or civil partnership status Divorced	
7. When died 2020 March Eleventh 1234 hours						
8. Where died Royal Infirmary Training TA1 1AT						
9. Usual residence (if different from 8 above) 78 Upper Cross Crescent Training TA9 8RR						
10. Cause of death I (a) Pneumonia (b) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (c) (d) II  Certifying registered medical practitioner      Jason Williams						
11. Forename(s), surname(s) and occupation of spouse(s) or civil partner(s) Catherine Morrison, Hospital Laboratory Technician						
12. Forename(s), surname(s) and occupation of father/parent  _____				13. Forename(s), surname(s) and occupation of mother/parent  Moira McGregor or Kerr (deceased)		
14. Signature of Informant, how qualified to give information and address (Signed) Jamie McGregor (Transcribed)      Son 123 High Street Training TA1 2ER						
15. When registered	Year 2020	Month 3	Day 16	16. (Signed) Signature of Test Registrar _____ Registrar		
17.						
18.						

Extracted from the Register of Deaths

on Sixteenth March 2020 ..... Registrar

The above particulars incorporate any subsequent corrections or amendments to the original entry made with the authority of the Registrar General.

**Warning**

*It is an offence under section 53(3) of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965 for any person to pass as genuine any copy or reproduction of this extract which has not been made by a district registrar or assistant registrar and authenticated by his signature. This includes any photocopy made by any other person. Any person who falsifies or forges any of the particulars on this extract or knowingly uses, gives or sends as genuine any false or forged extract is liable to prosecution under section 53(1) of the said Act.*

## Death registration information template for use during 'remote' registrations

**DEATH REGISTRATION INFORMATION****DEATH ENTRY NUMBER :***(For registration office use during restriction of face-to-face registration due to COVID-19)***DECEASED**

<b>Name of deceased</b>	
<b>Date of death</b>	
<b>Place of death</b>	
<b>MCCD received – Y/N</b> <i>(insert serial number and date received, on receipt)</i>	
<b>Date of birth</b>	
<b>Place of birth</b>	
<b>Birth entry checked on ScotlandsPeople</b> <i>(entry number)</i>	
<b>Is extract to be sent by informant – Y/N</b> <i>(for birth outside Scotland)</i>	

**SPOUSE/CIVIL PARTNER**

<b>Full name(s) and occupation of spouse(s)/civil partner(s)</b> <i>If married or cp'd more than once, enter spouses/partners in order e.g. (1), (2), (3) etc.</i>	
<b>Is current/last spouse/civil partner retired or deceased?</b>	
<b>Date and place of marriage/cp</b> <i>If married or cp'd more than once, enter dates in order e.g. (1), (2), (3) etc.</i>	
<b>Checked on SP</b> <i>(entry numbers(s))</i> <i>If more than one marriage or cp, enter entry numbers in order e.g. (1), (2), etc.</i>	
<b>Is extract(s) to be sent by informant – Y/N</b> <i>(for marriage/cp outside Scotland)</i>	



**FATHER'S/PARENT'S DETAILS**

Full name and occupation of father/parent	
Is father/parent retired or deceased?	

**MOTHER'S DETAILS**

Full name(s) (incl. m.s. and all married surnames) and occupation of mother	
Is mother retired or deceased?	

**INFORMANT**

Name of informant			
Relationship to deceased			
Telephone number			
E-mail address			
Preferred contact – E-mail, telephone, Skype etc.?			
Postal address			
Date documents posted to informant			
Abb. Ext <i>(tick)</i>	Regn Privacy Notice <i>(tick)</i>	BD8 <i>(tick)</i>	Full extract(s) paid for <i>(insert number)</i>

**FUNERAL DIRECTOR – FORM 14**

Funeral Director making arrangements <i>(If informant wishes Form 14 to be e-mailed to FD)</i>	
E-mail address	
Telephone number	
Date Form 14 e-mailed to Funeral Director	