

National Medical Examiner update

January 2020

Welcome

In December, the UK government set out its intentions for the next session of parliament in the [Queen's speech](#). The briefing notes include proposals in the Health Services Safety Investigations Bill to amend the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, giving English NHS bodies the power to appoint medical examiners, and placing a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that enough medical examiners are appointed in the healthcare system in England. This will put medical examiners on a statutory footing in England and Wales (the Coroner and Justice Act already makes provision for health boards in Wales to appoint medical examiners).

I have continued to progress work to implement the medical examiner system throughout acute trusts in England and with NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP). Two new regional medical examiner officers (covering three English regions) have started work with us. In December we also started to gather information from acute trusts in England that have set up medical examiner offices, so that we can reimburse them for agreed costs which are not covered by cremation form 5 income. I have also been involved, along with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), in discussions to agree the model and funding for Wales.

We have also continued to engage with partners to inform and consult them about the implementation of medical examiners. I had the opportunity to visit the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 6 January 2020 and had a very productive discussion about the implications of introducing medical examiners for other healthcare providers. We will be developing plans for deaths in non-acute settings in coming weeks and will share more with you in future updates.

Dr Alan Fletcher, National Medical Examiner

What's included in this update

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- Funding the national medical examiner system in England
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- Learning from Deaths guidance for ambulance trusts in England
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Good practice guidelines

We have published [good practice guidelines](#) for medical examiners, following contributions from a number of colleagues including acute trusts and partner organisations. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to developing these. The guidelines combine learning from existing medical examiner offices and seek to clarify queries from host organisations. The guidelines will help ensure medical examiners across England and Wales have a consistent approach and that host organisations prepare effectively for the statutory system which will be implemented when parliamentary times allows.

Funding the national medical examiner system in England

As noted in the [16 January 2020 NHS Leaders Bulletin](#), the National Medical Examiner team has initiated the process for reimbursing approved costs for 2019/20. If your trust is recruiting for or running a medical examiner system in 2019/20 and you have not yet advised the National Medical Examiner team (funding.nme@nhs.net) of your activity, please contact this e mail address urgently.

Medical examiner offices will be able to claim recruitment costs of £750 per medical examiner and medical examiner officer recruited between April 2018 and March 2021.

The National Medical Examiner team is preparing guidance on the funding process for 2019/20 and 2020/21; it is expected this will be published in February or March 2020.

Funding the national medical examiner system in Wales

The medical examiner system in Wales is being funded directly from the DHSC via Welsh Government who will reimburse NWSSP for implementation and recruitment costs.

Regional infrastructure in England

Regional medical examiner officers Laura O'Donoghue (London region) and Siobhan Costello (Midlands region, and East of England region) have now started work with NHS England and NHS Improvement. Golda Shelley-Fraser starts as the regional medical examiner for the South West region on 3 February 2020 and the regional medical examiner officers for the North East and South East regions join at the end of February. Contact details for regional medical examiners can be found at the bottom of this update.

Implementation in Wales

Implementation in Wales is being overseen by a Programme Implementation Board, jointly chaired by NHS Wales and Welsh Government with delivery managed through:

- Dr Jason Shannon, Lead Medical Examiner for Wales
- Daisy Shale, Lead Medical Examiner Officer for Wales
- Andrew Evans, National Programme Manager

Medical examiners and medical examiner officers in Wales will be employed by Shared Services Partnership and deployed across seven integrated Health Board areas and two NHS trusts, in a “once for Wales” delivery model. The model, subject to final financial agreement from DHSC, will see a single medical examiner officer service operating from 19 key hospital sites in four regions across Wales. This will provide a standard delivery model scrutinising around 30,000 deaths per year and providing system level reporting to stakeholders, whilst providing a consistent approach to ensure both quality and equity. This is being reinforced by standard operating procedures and by performance and competency frameworks that will apply to the whole service in Wales. These will be tested and refined as the service develops during the non-statutory phase.

Scrutiny of deaths in acute hospitals is commencing in January 2020, and will grow in line with recruitment of medical examiners and medical examiner officers in coming months. It is

anticipated that the service will be scrutinising 50% of all relevant deaths by October 2020 and 100% by April 2021.

Learning from Deaths guidance for ambulance trusts in England

In July 2019, NHS England and NHS Improvement published [Learning from deaths guidance for ambulance trusts](#). This is closely aligned to requirements for acute, community and mental health trusts, while recognising the different operating environment for ambulance trusts. Ambulance trusts were required to publish learning from deaths policies in December 2019, and will be expected to begin reporting reviews of deaths in their care from Q1 2020/21.

On 8 January 2020, with our partners the Yorkshire and Humber Improvement Academy, NHS England and NHS Improvement held an initial workshop for ambulance trusts to explore how they will implement the learning from deaths guidance, including their approach to case record review.

Medical examiners based in acute trusts will have a vital role informing ambulance trusts when they detect concerns about the care they provided to a deceased patient or where bereaved people have raised a concern. This will help the ambulance trust to identify deaths for case record review or investigation where appropriate. When this occurs, medical examiners should also inform the ambulance trust if the acute trust is planning to review the death so that both organisations can consider working together where appropriate.

In Wales, the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust is already engaged in the Universal Mortality Review Process. Medical examiners will be able to raise concerns with the medical director, who will ensure a referral to the appropriate clinical governance process. Much joint working is already in place between the ambulance service and local health boards and trusts where incidents or concerns are identified.

Medical examiner and medical examiner officer training

In December's update we mentioned that more than 400 senior doctors have completed the face-to-face medical examiner training, and 630 people have completed the 26 e-learning modules. 270 more people are booked onto future training days in 2020.

The background to the medical examiner officer training and feedback from the first event held in November 2019 can be found on the [Royal College of Pathologist's \(RCPATH\) website](#). The next medical examiner officer training dates are 17 March and 6 May 2020. Details of future training for both medical examiners and medical examiner officers can also be found on [the RCPATH website](#). Due to demand, an extra date for medical examiner

training (19 February 2020) has been added, and additional places added to the existing dates to increase capacity.

Annual medical examiner update meeting

The first annual medical examiner update meeting, bringing together national and regional leaders to discuss current issues, will take place at RCPATH on 16 June. Places can be booked on the [RCPATH website](#).

Joint training for coroners and medical examiners

RCPATH and the Chief Coroner's Office are developing joint training days in 2020 for medical examiners and coroners. We consider it very important that strong working relationships between MEs and coroners are developed and the training is regionally focused to establish this.

The dates are:

- 25 March – South-East England (RCPATH, London)
- 17 April – South-West England (RCPATH, London)
- 30 April – East of England (RCPATH, London)
- 4 May – London (RCPATH, London)
- 15 May – Wales (Cardiff Life Sciences Hub)
- 22 May – North-West (Manchester Conference Centre)
- 19 June – Midlands (Conference Aston Hotel, Birmingham)

Please pencil the date into your diary and hold until booking details are known.

Contact details

We encourage you to continue to raise queries with us and share your thoughts on the introduction of medical examiners, via the contacts below:

National Medical Examiner's office based at NHS England and NHS Improvement

- for general enquiries: nme@nhs.net
- for enquiries about the National Medical Examiner's diary: Helen Hill, helen.hill6@nhs.net

In England

- for enquiries about implementation: Nick Day, nickday@nhs.net
- for funding enquiries: funding.nme@nhs.net

Regional medical examiners:

- East of England – Ellen Makings, ellen.makings1@nhs.net
- London – Mette Rodgers, metterodgers@nhs.net
- Midlands – Ben Lobo, benjamin.lobo@nhs.net
- North East & Yorkshire – Graham Cooper, graham.cooper11@nhs.net
- North West – Huw Twamley, huw.twamley@nhs.net
- South East – Zoe Hemsley, zoe.hemsley1@nhs.net
- South West – Golda Shelly-Fraser, golda.shelley-fraser@nhs.net

In Wales

- Lead Medical Examiner for Wales – Jason Shannon
Jason.L.Shannon@wales.nhs.uk
- Lead Medical Examiner Officer in Wales – Daisy Shale
Daisy.shale@wales.nhs.uk
- National Programme Manager – Andrew Evans
Andrew.evans@wales.nhs.uk

Further information

Further information about the programme, including previous editions of this bulletin, can be found on the [national medical examiner](#) webpage.

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership also has a webpage on the medical examiner system in Wales: www.nwssp.wales.nhs.uk/medical-examiner-service