



Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011

July 2013 Stakeholder Update

Removal of the Proposed Fee to the Public

We can now confirm that the previously planned universal fee to the public will no longer be introduced. This follows a decision by the Minister for Public Health, Michael Matheson in the wake of positive negotiations with stakeholders. Issues raised by the public during the lifespan of the two test sites in Dundee and Dumfries & Galloway reflected some unease with the concept of a fee for death certification, and therefore this is a positive development that should ensure full support for the new system. In conjunction with the scrapping of the existing cremation fees paid by the public, the decision to not introduce the universal fee now represents a total direct saving to bereaved families in Scotland of circa £5m per year.

Death Certification National Advisory Group

The National Advisory Group continues to meet regularly to provide oversight of the various streams of death certification work. Its last meeting was held on 1 March 2013 and the next meeting will be 13 August 2013. You can continue to find approved minutes of the group's meetings on the Scottish Government website at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Policy/BurialsCremation/Death-Certificate>

Evaluation of Test Sites

In our last update we advised that work was underway in two death certification test sites in NHS Tayside (Dundee City area) and NHS Dumfries & Galloway. The test sites concluded in February 2013 and we would like to thank all those involved, who worked hard to ensure the sites' successful operation.

A full evaluation of the test sites was carried out by Blake Stevenson Ltd. This was published on the Scottish Government website on 29 April 2013 and can be accessed at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/04/4457>

The evaluation was positive, noting that only 3% of MCCDs were 'not in order' under scrutiny conditions, and that review duration was generally in line with the original estimates. Some practical issues were identified, which are being explored and will be addressed prior to implementation. This includes eg

positive discussions with NHS Board Records Managers and Caldicott Guardians regarding Medical Reviewer access to medical records

Work of the Key Implementing Organisations

NHS Healthcare Improvement Scotland's work to recruit a Senior Medical Reviewer is now well underway. They are also developing the processes that will support the new review system, with support from colleagues from NHS National Services Scotland in aspects such as IT, data collection and programme management.

National Records of Scotland is also working on a pending consultation, its registrar training programme and the necessary IT changes to the registration system that will accommodate the randomised review process.

NHS Education Scotland continues to develop the online modules and educational materials that will support senior doctors, junior doctors and non-certifying medical staff. Resources developed for the non-certifying professionals will also be available to the public. Assisting NES is a short term Medical Advisory Group which will, in due course, be chaired by the new Senior Medical Reviewer.

Work with the funeral industry is also underway, via a Funeral Sub Group. The Group is currently working on communications and awareness-raising with the industry, as well as the exploration of any cross-border concerns for Scotland, given the different systems that will be in place across the UK and the recent announcement of a revised October 2014 launch date for the new system in England.

Consultation & Legislation

As indicated in our last update, a series of phased consultation exercises have already commenced and will continue over the coming months. Consultations on the training, experience and qualifications of the Senior Medical Reviewer and Medical Reviewers have already been completed and formal Guidance on these and other matters is being developed.

A consultation on the expedited procedure (for those who require a funeral to take place much more quickly than may normally be the case) will commence in July and will also be included in the Guidance.

National Records of Scotland expects to commence its own consultation on Form 8 (the registration of stillbirth form), Form 11 (the medical certificate of cause of death form) and Form 14 (the official extract of death) at the start of August.

The Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 (Commencement No. 1) Order 2013 came into force on June 8 2013. Primarily, this gave Healthcare Improvement Scotland the powers to appoint the Senior Medical Reviewer and Medical Reviewers. It also sets a statutory duty on organisations and individuals to co-operate with each other and follow any Guidance from Scottish Ministers in relation to training and information functions.

The Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 and all relevant secondary legislation will come into force on the same projected national implementation date in April 2014. Any underpinning work in relation to these will take place between now and then.

Communications

The Scottish Government continues to maintain and update the relevant pages on its website, and all stakeholders are free to use the messages and communications contained there:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Policy/BurialsCremation/Death-Certificate>

The Funeral Sub Group, National Records of Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Scottish Government continue to raise awareness with key sectors. The member organisations of the Death Certification Advisory Group are also playing a role in disseminating information and updates via their own communication networks.

Information and Contact

You can visit our webpages at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Policy/BurialsCremation/Death-Certificate>

You can email us at:

certificationofdeath@scotland.gsi.gov.uk