

**Extract – The Scottish Practice Managers Development Network Newsletter :
22nd July 2026**

Change to process for Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

This information is a reminder that the process for issuing the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) has changed as indicated in the last [CMO Letter](#) on February 2025:

“Section 1 – changes to the process for sending the MCCD directly to the registration office that the family choose to use and not be given to the next of kin/ legal guardian/ executor of the deceased’s estate/will or the funeral director.”

With almost 90% of deaths now being registered remotely, it is important that the MCCD is sent direct to the registration office. Apart from concerns about the unnecessary sharing of personal data, there have been many instances when the MCCD has been handed to next of kin, which has resulted in multiple registration offices trying to register the same death, as well as other issues e.g. families believing they require to keep the MCCD to inform other organisations of the death, such as banks.

Please ask the family/next of kin which registration office they intend to contact to register the death and email the MCCD to that office. Please also include the contact details of the next of kin where possible.

Please do not copy the family or funeral director into that email. The information contained in the MCCD is personal and should not be shared with anyone other than the registrar. Should the personal legal representative or someone with prior authorisation from the deceased wish to obtain a copy of the MCCD, they should be directed to apply for a copy under the process governed by the [Access to Health Records 1990](#). A funeral director should not be given a copy of the MCCD – they will be given the form 14, which contains all the information they need, once the death has been registered.

The hard copy of the MCCD should still be sent to the registrar by post as the legislation does still require this. This may be done in bulk on a regular basis if that is easier to manage.

Please note that if you already have arrangements in place with your local registration office(s) for passing MCCDs to them, these can continue, providing data protection is not being compromised by including other parties in the email.

Please also remember to report any reportable deaths to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS). The following document [Reporting deaths | COPFS](#) details the categories of death that require to be reported. It provides a clear and concise guide to assist practitioners in deciding whether a death requires to be reported to the Procurator Fiscal and how to go about this.

All reportable deaths must be notified to the Procurator Fiscal as soon as possible after they have occurred and before any steps are taken to issue a death certificate.

If a death certificate has been issued to the family and the Procurator Fiscal declines to accept the cause of death, this will have to be retrieved from the family, a distressing process which must be avoided as far as possible.

Deaths which do not fall into any of the reportable categories should not be reported to the Procurator Fiscal. In cases of doubt or difficulty, the relevant SFIU team may be contacted during office hours to discuss the circumstances and provide advice – contact details for SFIU can be found here [Contact us about a death investigation | COPFS](#). Please note however that, where it is determined that the death is reportable, a report will still require to be submitted in the usual way.

For clarity:

1. Please do not give MCCDs to anyone other than the registrar.
2. MCCDs should be emailed first, with the hard copy following.
3. Funeral directors don't need the MCCD, they will be issued with appropriate paperwork by the registrar.
4. Personal legal representative of the deceased should be directed to [Access to Health Records 1990](#), if they request a copy of the MCCD.
5. Please also remember to report deaths to the COPFS as required by the [COPFS Guidance to medical practitioners](#), to ensure any investigations are carried out prior to registration of the death. The tick box on the MCCD for reporting the death to the COPFS should only be ticked if formally reporting the death.

Please ensure that any locum or newly registered doctors, who may be certifying deaths, are made aware of these changes to previous arrangements.

For further information, please see the latest [CMO Guidance](#) issued in February 2025