

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

25 June 2015

Report by Deputy Chief Executive

CHANGES TO REGISTRATION OF DEATHS

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To advise Cabinet of recent changes to the registration of deaths in Scotland and to highlight emerging implications for the Registration Service and its customers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that Cabinet note the changes to the process for registering deaths and the potential emerging implications for the Registration Service and its customers.

**BACKGROUND**

3. National legislation has changed the process of registration of deaths and requires Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) to review a random sample of death certificates before the registration process can be completed. From 13 May 2015 a random selection of certificates will be selected for review, through the registration system. These reviews are designed to check the quality and accuracy of certificates and to improve how this information is recorded. Reviews will be conducted by a team of Medical Reviewers, all of whom are experienced doctors. This will affect both the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and the Council's Registration Service, via Customer First.

**REPORT**

4. The Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 has recently introduced a number of changes to the current system for registering deaths. From **13 May 2015**, the Act has:

- introduced a new national review system to provide independent checks on the quality and accuracy of Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death (MCCD);
- ended additional paperwork and fees for cremations to make the process the same for everyone, and
- meant that all deaths **must be registered** before either a burial or cremation can take place.

5. In the past, MCCDs have not always been as fully or accurately completed as they could have been. The new arrangements are designed to:

- improve the quality and accuracy of MCCDs;
- provide improved public health information about causes of death in Scotland; and
- ensure that the processes around death certification are robust and have appropriate safeguards in place.

6. Under the new system, Healthcare Improvement Scotland will independently review a random sample of MCCDs. This means that, if the MCCD is selected, the registration cannot be completed until the review is finished. In these cases, there will be a delay in obtaining the Form, 14 (Certificate of Death) from the Registrar of Birth, Deaths and Marriages.

7. The reviews will fall under one of two categories. For Level 1 reviews, the medical reviewer will check the MCCD and speak to the certifying doctor. This should take one working day. In addition to these reviews, there will be a smaller number of Level 2 reviews where the medical reviewer will speak to the certifying doctor and also check relevant medical records. This should take three working days.

8. If the MCCD is selected for review and the funeral has to take place within a certain timescale, the bereaved can apply for advance registration via the Registrar of Birth, Deaths and Marriages. Applications for *advance registration* will be considered in special circumstances such as:

- religious/cultural (such as faith requirements to bury a person's body quickly);
- compassionate (where delays would cause significant and unnecessary distress); and
- practical/administrative (for example, family have travelled from abroad to attend the funeral).

9. In all cases, the registrar will contact the bereaved family when the review is completed.

## **SERVICE IMPLICATIONS**

10. There are a number of implications for the Registration Service in implementing these changes, particularly around weekend and public holiday provision. In addition, it is anticipated that the Customer First staff dealing with these Registrations may face concern from grieving members of the public who are keen to register deaths without delay and who may be anxious if selected for this new random check, which will introduce a delay.

11. Given the demographic make-up of East Refrewshire, there are particular concerns about the impact on the local Jewish and Muslim communities given the new ruling that burials cannot now proceed without completion of the death registration process. It is not yet possible to estimate the impact on the service, particularly out of hours, and it will take a few months of working with the new system to ascertain the changes required going forward. Discussions are ongoing with representatives of these communities.

12. However, in the meantime, Customer First are currently reviewing arrangements for the registration service and its customers, in discussion with the HSCP. This will mean a requirement to improve the out-of-hours service provision and a formal stand-by rota for registration staff. In recent weeks the registration staff have been contacted and called out regularly now at weekends as a result of these changes to legislation – this is unprecedented; there were just two call-outs in 2014/15 for funerals being arranged out of the country.

13. All registrations must take place through computers enabled with a specific programme and with specific printing facilities. To date, registrations have only been able to take place in the main council buildings at Giffnock and Barrhead. During out of hours emergencies, the Giffnock building is opened specifically for the registration, which can have implications not only for the registration staff in terms of lone-working but also for facility officers and the alarm company as both have to be contacted to facilitate opening of the

building. To minimise the impact, it is proposed that in future out of hours registrations are offered from Thornliebank Depot, which is the Council's 24/7 operational site. Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that the surroundings for these registrations are as customer-friendly as possible and that there is no negative impact from this change of venue for out of hours registrations.

14. To prevent any unnecessary call-outs for staff, and to prevent frustrations for customers, communication (especially via funeral providers; the medical profession and burial grounds) is paramount to ensure that customers have the required information prior to contacting the service (e.g. the MCCD). Annex 1 gives example of a national leaflet made available to describe the process.

15. Other service changes which are being considered by Customer First include:

- Prioritising of death registrations on a Monday and Friday (Tuesdays after public holidays) and encouraging birth appointments Tuesday to Thursday.
- Reviewing the length of appointment slots to maximise provision.
- Reviewing the accommodation available for registration appointments (e.g. registrations of births could be carried out in the service centres to allow the scarce private interview rooms to be prioritised for death registrations).
- Reviewing the back-office provision for services such as extracts and taking in of marriage lines etc to free-up trained registration staff for frontline duties, including marriages.
- Reviewing standby and out of hours arrangements and allowances for staff, based on the level of emerging demand for the service.

16. These changes are being made in consultation with registration staff from neighbouring authorities, as there is a knock-on impact of one another's provision on each council.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

17. There will be financial implications for the out of hours, standby and call-out cover required to facilitate this new process. Increased costs are not yet known until the scale of increased demand for the service can be determined. Immediate information suggests new requirements of £5,000 to £10,000 to facilitate the standby cover and disturbance allowances and overtime payments for actual call-outs. This will be better understood once we get a sense of demand and volume of transactions over weekends and on public holidays. This will be reviewed over the next few months and the financial implications built into the forthcoming budget process.

## **CONCLUSION**

18. The national changes to the death registration process via the Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 will have implications not only for the medical profession and the Council, but for customers too. For a random sample of cases (circa 10%), this will introduce a delay to the process of completing a death registration, which is likely not only to be upsetting to the customer, but has important implications for certain religious groups too, meaning knock-on impact for out of hours services. The Council will now take some time to better understand these impacts, working in consultation with the HSCP and representatives of religious groups, to make appropriate arrangements to minimise impact on customers and continue to provide a high quality, accurate service.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

19. It is recommended that Cabinet note the changes to the process for registering deaths and the potential emerging implications for the Registration Service and its customers.

## **REPORT AUTHOR**

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10 June 2015

## **KEYWORDS**

This report gives an update on changes to the Council's procedures for registering deaths as a result of the Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011. Keywords are: registration; Customer First; death certification.

## HOW THIS MIGHT AFFECT YOU

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If the death you are registering is selected for review you can make initial funeral arrangements. However, the funeral itself cannot take place until the review is complete and you receive the Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14) from the registrar.

If you need the funeral to go ahead quickly, you can apply for **advance registration**.

Advance registration can be applied for in special circumstances as follows:

- \* for religious/cultural reasons (for example, local tradition or faith requirements to bury a person's body quickly)
- \* for compassionate reasons (where delays would cause significant and unnecessary distress), and
- \* for practical/administrative reasons (for example, family have travelled from abroad to attend the funeral)

For more information about Healthcare Improvement Scotland's Death Certification Review Service, visit [www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org)

## DEATH CERTIFICATION REVIEW: ADVANCE REGISTRATION

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Available for Registrations selected for review from 13 May 2015



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## BACKGROUND

Following the introduction of new legislation, changes are being made to the way deaths are registered in Scotland. One of these changes means that, from **13 May 2015**, Healthcare Improvement Scotland will review a random sample of medical certificates of cause of death (MCCDs). The MCCD is also known as the Form 11.

These reviews are designed to check the quality and accuracy of MCCDs and to improve the way that information about deaths is recorded.

THERE ARE TWO CATEGORIES OF REVIEW.

Level 1 reviews should normally be completed within one working day and Level 2 reviews within three working days.

Under the new system, medical reviewers will examine a random sample of about 10% of all deaths through a Level 1 review. An additional small number of MCCDs will be examined through a Level 2 review.

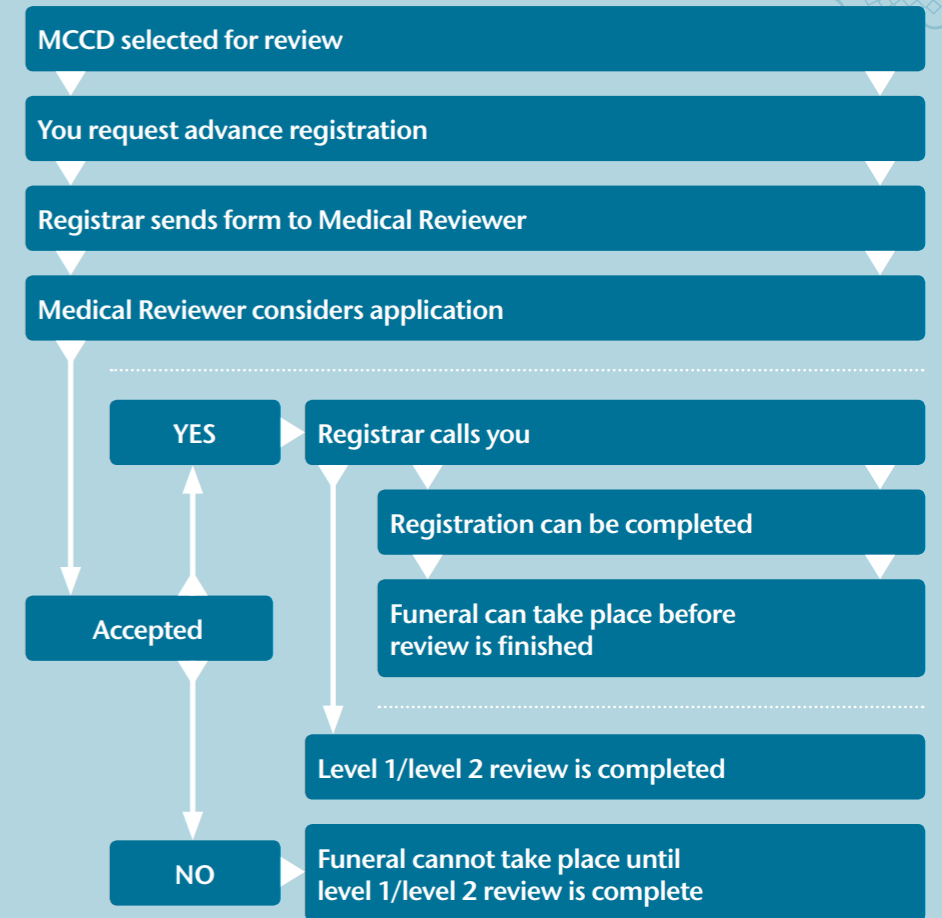
## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If you choose to apply for advance registration the registrar will provide you with an application form and can help you to complete it.

The registrar will contact Healthcare Improvement Scotland where a medical reviewer will assess your application, along with the content of the MCCD. The medical reviewer will usually be able to confirm (within two hours of the application being made) if the funeral can proceed. The registrar will contact you to let you know if your application has been successful or not.

If the application does not meet the criteria for advance registration you do not need to take any further action.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU REQUEST AN ADVANCE REGISTRATION



## HOW THIS AFFECTS YOU

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If the death you are registering is selected for review you may not immediately be able to complete the death registration. The registrar will explain the review process and timescales, and will contact you when the review is complete.

You can still make initial funeral arrangements while the review is underway. However, the funeral itself cannot take place until the review is completed and a Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14) is produced.

This can be collected from the registrar or sent to you or sent direct to the person arranging the funeral to allow the funeral to go ahead.

If you need the funeral to go ahead quickly, in special circumstances you may be granted advance registration. You can read more about how to apply for **advance registration** here – see insert web address or leaflet name.

## DEATH CERTIFICATION IN SCOTLAND

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A guide to death certification and registration changes in Scotland



The Scottish  
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## WHAT THIS LEAFLET IS ABOUT

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The arrangements for death certification and registration in Scotland are changing.

From 13 May 2015 all deaths must be registered before burial or cremation can take place.

## BACKGROUND

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Every death in Scotland must be certified by a doctor who completes a form called a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD). This is also known as the Form 11.

If you are registering a death you must take the MCCD to a registrar. A death cannot be registered without the MCCD. A death may be registered in any registration office in Scotland and must be registered within eight days of the date of death

With changes being made to the way deaths are registered in Scotland, it is important that you try and register the death at the earliest opportunity.

Most registration offices operate an appointment system so you should contact your local office as soon as possible.

Once registration is complete you will be given a Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14). This is the document that confirms that the death has been registered and is required before a burial or cremation can go ahead.

## NEW REVIEW SERVICE

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National legislation has changed the process of registration of deaths and requires Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) to review a random sample of certificates.

From 13 May 2015 a random selection of certificates will be selected for review, through the registration system. These reviews are designed to check the quality and accuracy of certificates and to improve how this information is recorded.

Reviews will be conducted by a team of Medical Reviewers, all of whom are experienced doctors. Further information on the review service can be read here – insert web address

## INVESTIGATION OF A DEATH BY THE PROCURATOR FISCAL

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Deaths which are reported to the Procurator Fiscal will not be included in those selected for review. Further information on the role of the Procurator Fiscal in the investigation of deaths can be found at:

[www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/deaths](http://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/deaths)