**Coronavirus (Covid-19) related deaths in the Community**

**Guidance for medics, care homes and hospices**

**This document is an amalgamation of guidance from the Chief Coroner, Central Government, the Office of National Statistics, the General Registry Office and Local Registry Offices at City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council.**

**Attending a death in the community where coronavirus (Covid-19) is known or suspected**

**General Practitioner**

Where you attend a patient outside of a healthcare setting who has died as a result of confirmed or suspected coronavirus (Covid-19) you should follow the general guidance for primary care which was issued by the Government in relation to Covid-19. Specifically this includes:-

* Advise others not to enter the room
* Wear PPE in line with standard infection control precautions, such as gloves, apron and fluid resistant surgical mask
* Keep exposure to a minimum

**Care Home and Hospice**

Residential care homes and hospices should follow guidance on handling in a residential care provision. Specifically this includes:-

* Ensure all residents maintain a distance of at least 2m (3 steps) or are in another room from the deceased person
* Avoid all non-essential staff contact with the deceased person to minimise risk of exposure. If a member of staff does need to provide care for the deceased person this should be kept to a minimum and correct PPE used as set out in the guidance on residential care provision (gloves, apron and fluid resistant surgical mask)
* You should follow the usual processes for dealing with a death in your setting, ensuring that infection prevention and control measures are implemented as set out in the guidance on residential care provision.

**Changes to the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death**

The legislative changes brought about by the Coronavirus Act 2020 confirm that:-

* Any registered medical practitioner can sign an MCCD, even if the deceased was not attended during their last illness and not seen after death, provided that they are able to state the cause of death to the best of their knowledge and belief.
  + If the deceased was attended by a registered medical practitioner to do so, another medical practitioner can sign.
* If a medical practitioner (who does **not** have to be the same medical practitioner who signed the MCCD) attended the deceased within 28 days before death (a new, longer timescale) or after death, then the registrar can register the death in the normal way.

**Attendance before death**

The General Registry Office position is that attendance before death can be visual (ie in person) or by video (e.g. Skype), but cannot be by audio (ie telephone) only. Attendance in death must be in person.

**Requirement on medical practitioner to notify the Coroner**

The Notification of Deaths Regulations 2019 is disapplied during the emergency period set out in the legislation. The duty on medical practitioner to inform the coroner only applies during the emergency period where it is reasonably believed that there is no other medical practitioner who may sign MCCD or that such a medical practitioner is not available within a reasonable time of the person’s death to do so.

**Recording Covid-19 as the cause of death on a death certificate**

Clarity has been provided by the Office of National Statistics:-

* Covid-19 is acceptable as the direct or underlying cause of death for MCCD
* Covid-19 as the cause of death is not a reason on its own to refer to the coroner
* It is acceptable to qualify mention of Covid-19 with words such as ‘possibly’ or ‘probably’ indicating the absence of a positive virology test or some ambiguity in clinical presentation, and such qualifiers do not in themselves imply sufficient doubt on the Cause of Death to require referral to a coroner.
* The fact that Covid-19 is a notifiable disease under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010 does not mean referral to a coroner is required by virtue of its notifiable status.

**Death to be reported to the North Yorkshire Registry Office**

**Medical Certificates**

With immediate effect, instead of handing the medical certificate to the relatives in an envelope, please scan BOTH sides of the Medical Certificate and email to

[Registrars.MCCD@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:Registrars.MCCD@northyorks.gov.uk)

Please put the full name of the deceased in the subject line of the email.

Please then inform the relatives that they should telephone us on 01609 780780 and their request will be sent on to the registrar. We will be asking the relatives a few simple questions to enable us to match the relatives with the relevant medical certificate.

You should then post the paper copy of the medical certificate to your local registration office. This can be done in one envelope at the end of the week.

**Registration of the death**

Upon receiving a telephone request for the registration from the relatives, we will contact them back when we have matched the relatives to the correct medical certificate. This process will be explained to the relatives when they make their call to the council.

Face to face appointments have been suspended for all appointments and the registration offices have been closed to callers until further notice.

If you do have any questions during this fast moving and developing situation email [Registrars.MCCD@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:Registrars.MCCD@northyorks.gov.uk).

**Deaths Reported to the York Register Office**

With immediate effect please scan the MCCD to [registrar@york.gov.uk](mailto:registrar@york.gov.uk) rather than asking the family to collect it. (**BOTH SIDES** of the document will need to be visible)

The MCCD needs to be fully completed and for the doctor’s printed name and GMC number to be clearly legible at the foot of the MCCD.

Please put the full name of the deceased in the subject line of the e mail.

Where possible please provide a contact name and number for the family member who would normally have picked up the MCCD so the team can make contact to arrange a telephone appointment. Alternatively please ask them to telephone 01904 654 477. Once the MCCD is received MCCD the team will call them to make a telephone appointment and send them a prompt sheet setting out the information it needs.

**ALL ORIGINAL MCCDs MUST BE RETAINED SECURELY** after they are scanned. Please file them in date order of issue. The team will liaise with you in due course regarding how and when those MCCDs should be sent to York Register Office.

If there are any particular queries arising please email [registrar@york.gov.uk](mailto:registrar@york.gov.uk) marked for Fiona Walters (Registrations Operations Manager).