

Expected Deaths and Death Certification Out of Hours

Sheffield
LMC



GUIDANCE FOR SHEFFIELD GPs June 2024

Representatives from Sheffield LMC, Sheffield GP Collaborative, General Practice, Medical Examiner and Muslim Faith have collaboratively updated this guidance, which has been issued in response to recurrent issues surrounding urgent requests by Muslim families out of hours for death certificates, in cases of expected deaths. Muslim families have experienced added distress in trying to obtain the necessary legal paperwork to expedite their relative's burial. GPs have been placed in difficult professional and ethical situations.

In a situation where the registered GP is aware of an anticipated expected death / palliative situation in a Muslim patient, and if the GP is prepared to be contacted out of hours in the event of an expected death, the GP should complete an electronic GP Collaborative 'Special Notes Form' and forward it to the GP Collaborative.

The LMC would encourage those GPs who wish to participate to complete the Special Notes Form in a timely manner.

Where the GP has indicated that they are willing to be contacted, GP Collaborative staff will contact the GP directly and make them aware of the need for a death certificate.

Certification of an expected death out of hours is not a contractual obligation - this is a voluntary arrangement that some GPs may feel able to offer to support Muslim families.

Under no circumstances should anyone else contact or be given contact details for the GP

This cannot apply to unexpected deaths or deaths occurring in suspicious circumstances - these must proceed through the normal Coroner's office channels

The Coronavirus Act 2020 enabled GPs who were not the patient's registered GP to complete death certificates in expected deaths, after a conversation with a Medical Examiner. This expired at midnight on 24 March 2022. Updated guidance on the regulations in force from 25 March 2022 can be found via the links below:

- Gov.uk [Guidance for doctors completing medical certifications of cause of death in England and Wales](#)
- BMA [COVID-19: death certification and cremation](#)
- RCGP Learning [Changes to death certification](#)

Emergency Burial Service: The Register Office offers a service on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays from 9 am to 5 pm and is accessed via Tel: 07802 864178 or 07764 661143. Only one of these numbers is operational at any given time, so GPs are advised to try both numbers if they do not get an answer or option to leave a message on their first attempt. The service offered is to issue the Green Form 9 to facilitate a funeral at short notice for a burial or cremation in this country. The family would then need to return to register the death in the following week. The service would not allow repatriation - families would need to contact the coroner in that instance. As with GPs, the Registrar cannot authorise a funeral if the death is one where the coroner needs to be involved.