



# A Guide to Death Certification Review in Scotland

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## What this leaflet is about

This leaflet explains:

- the role of the Death Certification Review Service (DCRS), which is part of Healthcare Improvement Scotland
- the levels of review that may be carried out
- how a review may affect funeral arrangements, and
- how an advance registration can be requested in special circumstances

## Background

When someone dies, a doctor in attendance will, if possible, give a cause of death and complete a form called a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD). This is also known as Form 11. The person's family or friend has to then inform the local council about the death. This is called registering the death.

If you are registering a death, you need to take the MCCD to a council registrar. A death cannot be registered without the MCCD. A death may be registered in any registration office in Scotland. You have 8 days from the date of death to do this. You usually need an appointment to register a death so you should contact your local registration office as soon as possible. Once registration is complete, you will be given a Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14). You need this form before a burial or cremation can go ahead.

## Interim Registration arrangements for COVID-19



To remove the need for face to face contact, National Records of Scotland (NRS) have introduced remote registration.

The certifying doctor will email the MCCD (Form 11), or the Certificate of Stillbirth (Form 6) to the next of kin/informant and the registration office the next of kin/informant would like to register the death.

Certifying doctors are also asked to put a hard copy in the post to the registrar.

## The Death Certification Review Service

About one in eight MCCDs are randomly selected for review by DCRS. These reviews are designed to check the quality and accuracy of MCCDs and to improve how information about the cause of death is recorded. There are two types of review, Level 1 and Level 2. We aim to complete Level 1 reviews within 24 hours. Level 2 reviews may take up to 3 days to complete.

Reviews are carried out by a team of medical reviewers who are all experienced doctors.

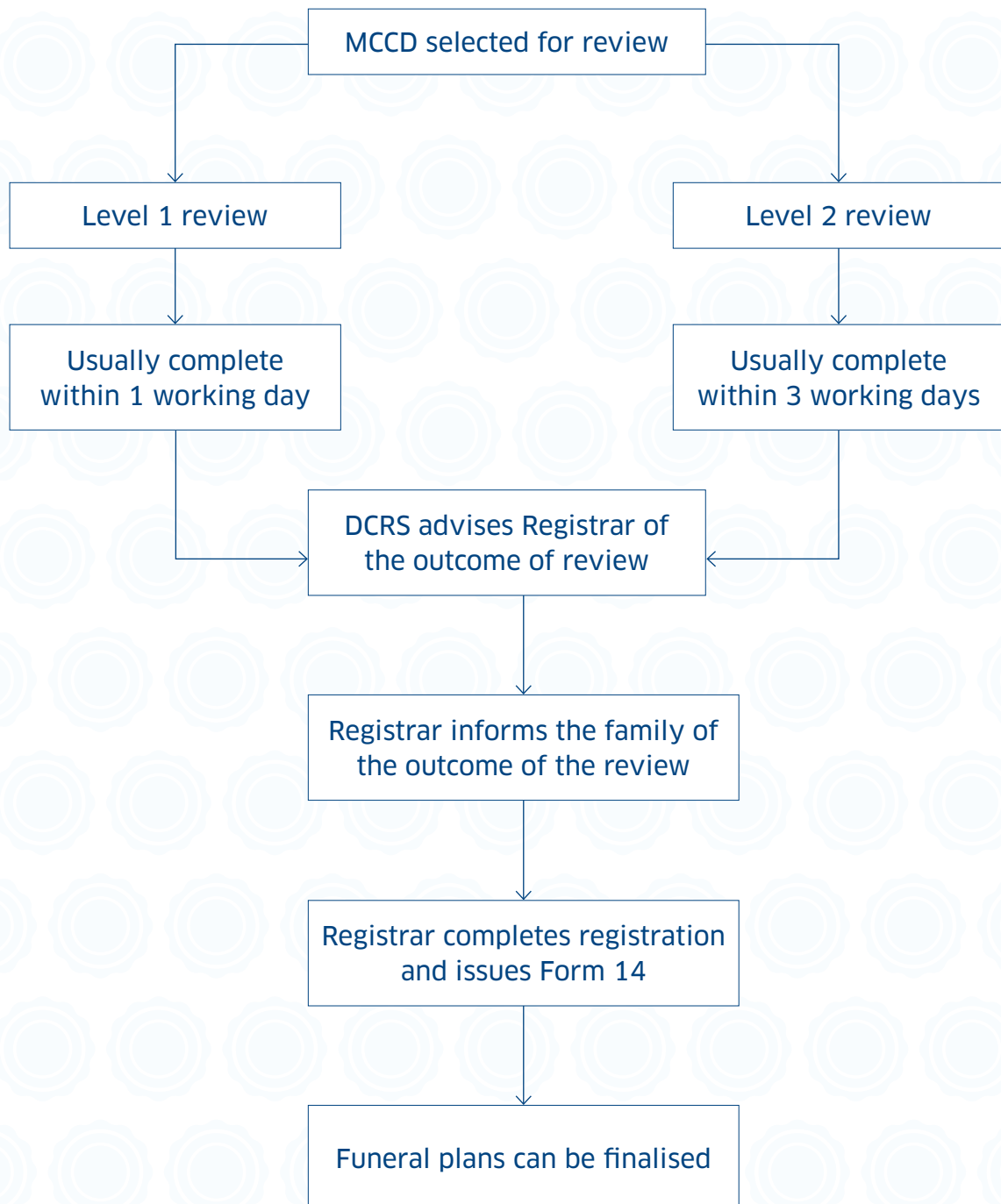
There are three possible outcomes of the review:

- No changes required
- An email amendment is required
- A replacement MCCD is required

If the MCCD is changed after the review, the registrar will let you know what these changes are.

(see flow diagram on page 3)





### Investigation of a death by the Procurator Fiscal

Deaths that are reported to the Procurator Fiscal are not reviewed by DCRS. More information on how the Procurator Fiscal is involved in the investigation of deaths can be found at: [www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/deaths](http://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/deaths)

## How this may affect you

If the death you are registering is selected for review, you might not be able to register the death right away. The registrar will tell you about the review and how long this may take. The registrar will let you know when the review is complete. You can start making funeral arrangements while the review is happening. However, the funeral cannot take place until the review is finished and you have been given a Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14). You can collect the Form 14 from the registrar or have it sent to you or to the person arranging the funeral. Signature pads in registrars' offices may be used so informants do not need to re-attend to collect the Form 14 in person. If you need the funeral to go ahead quickly, you can apply for advance registration.

### Advance Registration

Advance registration allows the funeral to be carried out before the review of the MCCD is complete. Applications for advance registration will be considered in special circumstances such as:

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

The registrar will help you apply for an advance registration at the time you go to register the death. The medical reviewer will assess your request for advance registration, along with the content of the MCCD. DCRS will usually be able to confirm within two hours if your application has been approved. We recommend that registrars call DCRS before making an advance registration request in case the review is already nearing completion.

Reasons that an advance registration may be turned down can include the following.

- The review is very nearly complete and will not be speeded up by an advance registration.
- The death needs to be reported to the Procurator Fiscal.
- The MCCD needs substantial corrections and will need to be changed.

When an advance registration is approved, the review of the MCCD is still carried out by the medical reviewer. Sometimes this results in the extract from the register of deaths (commonly referred to as the death certificate) being changed to be more accurate. If this happens, the registrar will let you know that the original document has been recalled and the new one needs to be collected.



For more information about DCRS visit our website or contact us:

**[www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/deathcertification](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/deathcertification)**

email: **[his.dcrs@nhs.scot](mailto:his.dcrs@nhs.scot)**

telephone: 0300 123 1898