

KENT AND MEDWAY REGISTRARS AND KENT CORONERS JOINT SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN LAW FOLLOWING CORONAVIRUS ACT 2020 FOR DOCTORS CERTIFYING DEATH AND ISSUING CREM 4 FORMS

MCCD

If the deceased was attended in life for their last illness within 28 days of the death or viewed after death, it does not have to be the same doctor who saw in life or viewed after death that signs the MCCD; another registered medical practitioner can sign the MCCD if the one who saw the deceased is not available (within a reasonable timeframe).

Attended in life is in person or by video link not telephone
Viewed after death must be in person

BUT

Any registered medical practitioner can sign an MCCD even if the deceased was not attended in 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.

REFERRAL TO THE CORONER

It is only those cases where the deceased has not been seen in life or after death or where no medical practitioner can sign (or one is not available to sign) an MCCD that should be referred to the Coroner.

BUT

Deaths should be referred to the Coroner if there is any other reason for doing so. See Notification of Deaths Regulations 2019

CREMATION 4

Any medical practitioner can complete Cremation Form 4. They do not have to have seen the deceased themselves but if they have not, the deceased must have been attended by another medical practitioner either within 28 days of the death occurring or another medical practitioner must have viewed the body after the death in person

A doctor can sign a Crem 4 where the deceased has not been seen in life or after death by a doctor if the Coroner has issued a Form A

COVID-19

Covid-19 may be given as a cause of death in the absence of a positive virology test or where there is some ambiguity in clinical presentation. Words such as *possibly* or *probably* may be used on an MCCD as a qualifier

If the Dr is satisfied to the best of their knowledge and belief that Covid-19 caused the death they can put it on the MCCD even where there has been no testing. The Dr is making a clinical judgement based on the medical history and the symptoms and the standard is lower than 'is it more likely than not'

which is the test that lawyers use sometimes called the balance of probabilities.

Doctors have been signing MCCDs for pneumonia for years without confirmation of whether it is viral or bacterial.

It is also permissible to use possible or probable Covid-19, but this can only be used as a qualifier and it can't stand alone because a possible or probable condition cannot function as a cause of death.

Therefore something like Infective exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, possibly Covid -19 or Pneumonia, probable Covid-19 might be examples.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

The MCCD must include the following information:

- GMC Number
- Doctors full name legibly printed next to the signature
- Last seen alive date
- The full address of where the deceased died (not home)

MCCDs must be completed as a wet signature and scanned to the registrar as soon as possible after the death has occurred as there is a legal obligation for the death to be registered within 5 days

For Kent deaths email registeroffice@kent.gov.uk

For Medway deaths email register.office@medway.gov.uk

Each MCCD must be scanned separately and the front AND back of the MCCD must be scanned

Care must be taken to ensure all the information on the MCCD is scanned and information is not cut off (particularly the Certificate No. & doctor signature)

The email attaching the MCCD must contain the following:

- Contact details for Next of Kin
- Contact details for Doctor/GP Surgery/Hospital issuing

Original MCCDs MUST NOT be given to Next of Kin or family members but should be sent by post to:

For Kent deaths: Kent History & Library Centre, James Whatman Way, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1LQ

For Medway Deaths: Medway Register Office, The Corn Exchange, Northgate, Rochester, Kent ME1 1LS

Patricia Harding
Senior Coroner
North East Kent
Central & South
East Kent

Mid Kent & Medway

Roger Hatch
Senior Coroner
North West Kent

Jane Collins
Supt. Registrar
Kent & Bexley

James Brown
Supt. Registrar
Medway

8th April 2020