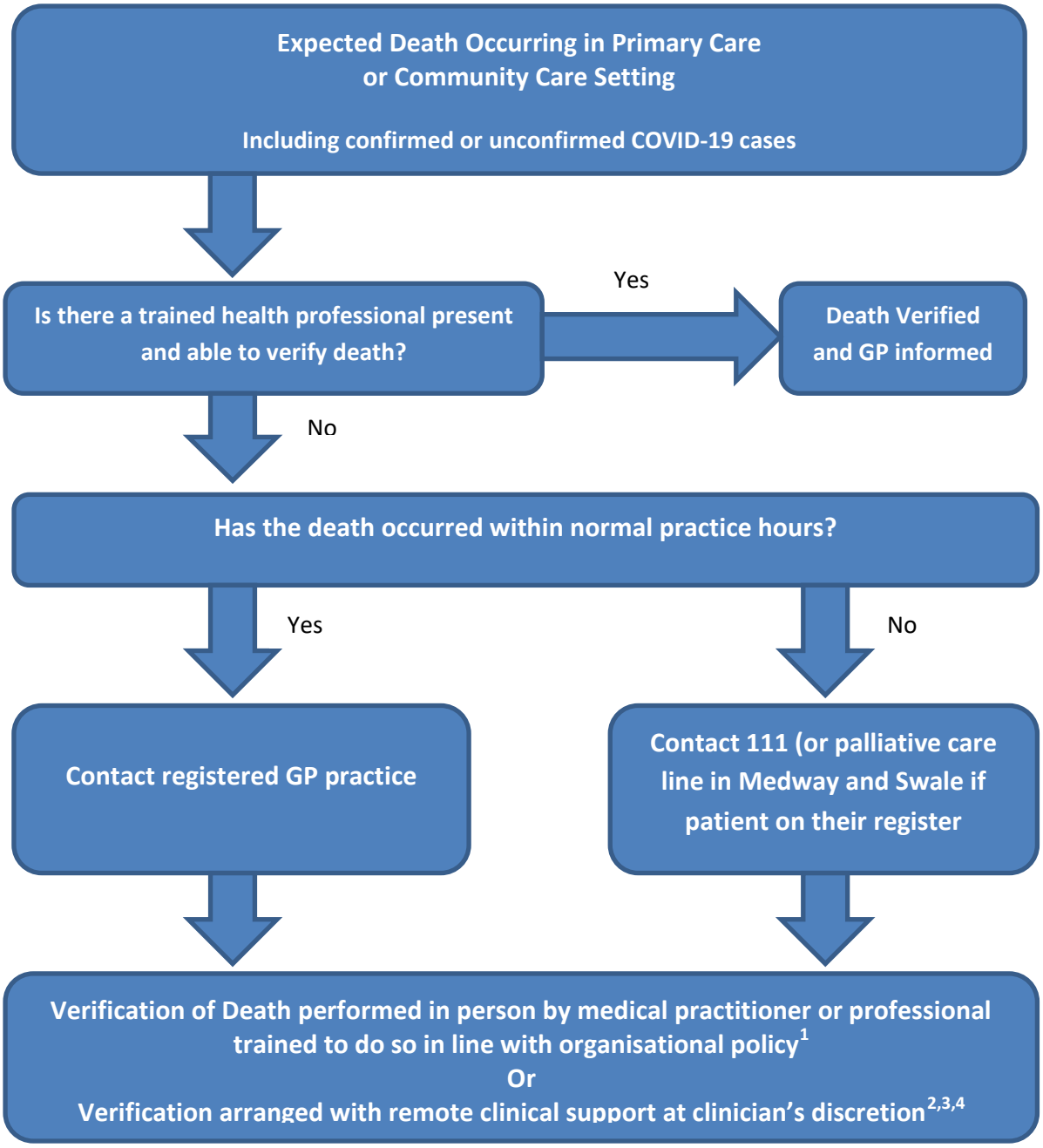
Process for Verification of Expected Death in Period of COVID-19 Emergency Measures

Kent and Medway End of Life Care COVID-19 Response Group 15.05.2020



1. Trained health professionals qualified to perform verification of death include medical practitioners, registered nurses, advanced care practitioners or paramedics trained to do so in line with their employer's policies and profession specific guidance.
2. As outlined in DOHSC Guidance; Coronavirus (COVID-19): verifying death in times of emergency published 5 May 2020. https://www.gov.uk/covid-19 VoED guidance. See Annex 1.
3. In Kent and Medway this must be a health care worker who has received the recognised K+M supporting verification of expected death training.
4. In cases where the patient has not been seen by a doctor within the past 28 days, the clinician must make every reasonable effort to ensure that the deceased is viewed after death by a doctor in person. If this is not possible the death must be referred to the coroner

Annex 1: Guidance for remote clinical support for verification of death

This process assumes that resuscitation has already been ruled out.

During core practice hours these actions should be conducted by a clinician from the patient's practice.

Outside core practice hours the below actions should be carried out by a clinician working as part of the NHS 111/IUC CAS (this would include "out of Hours" providers) –

General Considerations

- It is important that to carry out this procedure in a compassionate manner.
- The below steps should be recorded in your organisation's host IT system
- Be aware of any cultural or religious requirements
- Identify the person supporting remote verification and their role
- Ensure the verifier and the remote clinical support staff have both considered privacy and dignity prior to verifying – such as ensuring only essential persons are in attendance/checking with family whether they wish for only persons of the same sex to verify the body.
- Establish the circumstances immediately prior to the death and any patient history. The verifier and the remote clinical support staff need to be satisfied that there is no reason to refer this death to the police or coroner.

Key Questions

- Is this an unexpected death? If yes, report to coroner
- Is there any sign of a suspicious death? If yes, report to police
- Have you established the identity of the deceased person, e.g. using photo ID?

Equipment to assist verification of death:

- Pen torch or mobile phone torch
- Stethoscope (optional)
- Watch or digital watch timer
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) – see guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19

Documentation required for verification of death:
Confirm the identification of the person. – e.g. using photo ID
Record the full name, date of birth, address, NHS number and, ideally, next of kin details
The time of death is recorded as the time at which verification criteria are fulfilled.

The Verification Process (using remote clinical support)

Ask the remote clinical support staff to complete the following checks:	Confirmed?
1. Neurological system	
• Check pupils are dilated and fixed (unresponsive to light directed into both eyes using a torch)	
• Check there is no response to painful stimuli - If you squeeze the muscle between the neck and the shoulder (the trapezius), do they respond?	
2. Respiratory System	
• Check that there is no movement of the chest wall for 3 minutes by observing the chest (you may need to advise removal of clothing to expose the chest/abdomen)	
3. Circulatory System	
• Advise verifier to find the site of the carotid pulse and check for one minute that pulse is absent.	
4. Reassessment	
Wait 10 minutes and repeat the actions above	
5. Record that verification has been completed	
Record in line with your organisational policy Suggested items to record are: • Full name, date of birth, address and NHS number (if available) of person whose death is being verified • Name of person verifying • Role of person verifying • Who is present • Circumstances of death (location, who first noted it, anyone present at the time of death) • Outcome of verification, including time of death • Any discussions with staff or relatives • Any concerns from staff or relatives	
Confirmation of Identity	
For the purpose of confirming the identity of the deceased, it is recommended that an appropriate identity document is provided to the remote verifier e.g. via the video call or separate secure email.	

Following Verification: Be clear about removal from the deceased or safe keeping of items such as jewellery. Inform the key person(s) of the next steps in the process and the range of options available to them.