Welcome to the second issue of our Death Certification Briefing Note. In the first issue, published in May 2014 (available at www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/deathcertification), we outlined the changes due to take place as a result of the Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 coming into force in April 2015.

These changes include the establishment of a new national review service led by Healthcare Improvement Scotland. One of the main functions of this service will be to check the quality and accuracy of completion of a sample of Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCDs).

Reviews will fall under one of two categories. For Level 1 reviews, a Healthcare Improvement Scotland Medical Reviewer will check the MCCD and speak to the certifying doctor. For Level 2 reviews, the Medical Reviewer will speak to the certifying doctor and check relevant medical records.

This issue provides an update on recent implementation activity. More information about the new arrangements can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Policy/BurialsCremation/Death-Certificate

If you have any comments on the Briefing Note please contact Rob MacPhail, Senior Communications Officer, Healthcare Improvement Scotland (rob.macphail@nhs.net)
Launch date confirmed for new review service

A number of important milestones relating to the new arrangements around death certification and registration have been reached since our first Briefing Note was published earlier this year.

In a key development, it has been confirmed that the new review service will launch on 29 April 2015.

This followed on from the announcement this spring that the system will randomly select approximately 10% of all deaths for Level 1 review with additional Level 2 reviews. These deaths exclude those reported to the Procurator Fiscal. In practice, this means that Healthcare Improvement Scotland will review approximately 6,000 MCCDs a year.

Senior Medical Reviewer Dr George Fernie says: “Since the last briefing note was published, the sample size of MCCDs to be reviewed and the launch date have both been confirmed. There is a real sense that the key components are coming together and we are completely focused on ensuring that the new service is ready to hit the ground running on 29 April 2015.”

The arrangements for death certification and registration are changing to improve the quality and accuracy of MCCDs and to provide improved public health information about causes of death in Scotland.

New MCCD rolled out across Scotland

Certifying doctors are now completing a new MCCD form when someone dies.

The MCCD provides a permanent legal record of the fact of death, and allows the family to register the death, enabling the disposal of the body and settlement of the deceased’s estate.

The new MCCD form – which is also known as ‘Form 11’ – was successfully rolled out on 6 August 2014 by National Records of Scotland (NRS), which oversees the registration system in Scotland, including death registration. It has been introduced to assist in the implementation of the Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011, which will take effect from 29 April 2015.

Key changes include:
• an improved layout to make the new form easier to complete
• the addition of the deceased person’s Community Health Index (CHI) number
• the name of the NHS board area where the death occurred
• the inclusion of the certifying doctor’s business contact telephone number (which will help the review service to contact them if an MCCD they have completed is chosen for review), and
• additional information on the presence or otherwise of hazardous implants and public health risks; this is to assist funeral directors and crematoria staff in determining whether it is safe to cremate.

An electronic version of the MCCD form is due to be introduced for the launch of the new review system in April 2015, and gradually rolled out to other healthcare settings across Scotland (more details on page 4).
NHS Local Implementation Leads prepare for launch

While many of the actions relating to the new death certification system are being taken forward nationally, NHS boards are laying the groundwork for smooth implementation at a local level in April 2015.

Every NHS board in Scotland has now appointed a Local Implementation Lead to take overall responsibility for implementation of the new system within their area.

Each lead chairs a Local Implementation Group which should, at a minimum, include:

• local NHS board and hospice bereavement services
• health records managers
• staff involved in training
• primary and secondary care doctors
• members of the Local Medical Committee
• local authority/local funeral industry staff/crematoria and burial group, and
• faith/belief communities.

The main purpose of the Local Implementation Groups is to ensure that all certifying doctors and other relevant staff are fully aware of all of the changes and receive the necessary training, for example using training packages produced by NHS Education for Scotland. Groups will also develop co-ordinated processes to interact with people experiencing bereavement.

The group will also ensure the practical implications of operating the new system within the NHS board are met by 29 April 2015.

Local Implementation Leads from every NHS board meet on a regular basis to provide an update on progress, share good practice and lessons learned, and to ensure a consistent approach is developed throughout NHSScotland.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland provides the secretariat for the national group of Local Implementation Leads. For further information contact Project Officer Tammy Fenton (tammy.fenton@nhs.net)

Education and learning resources to support the new review service

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to develop educational resources to support the implementation of the new national review service.

NES is currently working with a Death Certification Medical Advisory Group, which includes a wide range of clinicians from different areas of expertise, to develop online educational modules for medical staff which will be available from January 2015. In addition, a dedicated website for non-certifying staff will be available early next year. A link to the new website will also be available on the NHS Inform webpage (www.nhsinform.co.uk).

For further information please contact Dr Janice Turner (janice.turner@nes.scot.nhs.uk)
Electronic MCCD system on track

NHS National Services Scotland (NSS), which provides advice and services to NHSScotland, is responsible for developing and implementing various technology solutions that will support the implementation of the legislation and the running of the new review service.

A team from NSS Information Technology (NSSIT) has been developing a system to enable electronic completion of an MCCD, or eMCCD, by certifying doctors when someone has died.

The eMCCD can be pre-populated with details about the deceased and the certifying doctor submitting the information.

After completing the onscreen form, including information about the cause of death, the certifying doctor will print out the MCCD, sign it, and give it to the deceased’s next of kin or nearest relative.

At the same time, the eMCCD will be transmitted to NRS. If the eMCCD is randomly selected for review at this point, the relevant details will be passed to the Healthcare Improvement Scotland review service.

The eMCCD is being rolled out to all GP Practices from 29 April 2015. It will then be rolled out to secondary care thereafter.

NHS boards will use the printed MCCD prior to the introduction of the eMCCD in their area and the printed MCCD will remain available as a back-up facility.

NSSIT Programme Manager Maggie Young, who leads on this specific part of the programme, explains: “One of the main challenges for us is the fact that each NHS board has its own patient management systems in place, and no two boards are the same in this respect. As a result, we have to develop specific solutions that suit the existing systems in each NHS board.”

Once introduced, the new system will deliver a much quicker transfer of information between the certifying doctor and NRS, should be readily decipherable and, it is believed, will lead to fewer errors in the completion of MCCDs.
Other developments

Healthcare Improvement Scotland welcomes new additions to the project team
Healthcare Improvement Scotland is delighted to welcome two new additions to the Death Certification project team. Operations Manager Rachel McArthur joins us from NHS Fife where she was a Practice Manager. Project Officer Rebecca Smith was formerly an Administrative Officer with the Scottish Patient Safety Programme.

Medical Reviewers
Healthcare Improvement Scotland has recently completed interviews for Medical Reviewers, who will support the Senior Medical Reviewer in reviewing MCCDs. The successful applicants are due to take up their posts in early 2015. More details will follow in the next issue of the Briefing Note.

Scottish Government

Outstanding legislation
The Scottish Government is currently working on key secondary legislation to enact parts of The Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 and supporting regulations in time for the launch date on 29 April 2015.

Public Communication
It is critically important that people in Scotland who may be affected by the changes are provided with clear, timely information and support. In addition, professionals who work within the sector and those who work directly with those who may be affected will be equipped to communicate the changes and implications of the new system.

The Scottish Government is currently working with stakeholders to produce information about changes to the system.

Information about the new arrangements can be found at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Policy/BurialsCremation/Death-Certificate

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