

JOB DESCRIPTION – MEDICAL EXAMINER (ME)

MEDICAL EXAMINER POST FOR SCRUTINISING AND CONFIRMING CAUSES OF DEATHS

In 2007, in response to the recommendations of the Shipman Inquiry, the Department of Health called for reform of the current death certification process. Based upon the Inquiry's findings, the DH proposed that a new role of Medical Examiner be established within healthcare environments.

Medical Examiners will be appropriately trained senior doctors who will verify clinical information on Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCDs), to ensure appropriate referrals to the Coroner and accuracy and consistency of MCCD content. They will be responsible for the scrutiny of the documentation and circumstances arising from the majority of deaths in England and Wales.

Main duties

Medical practitioners must be registered with a license to practise in the UK by the GMC, with at least five years experience. The candidate must have been registered as a medical practitioner throughout the previous five years as at the date of appointment. The main responsibilities of the ME are to:

- ensure compliance with the legal and procedural requirements associated with the current processes of certification, investigation (by coroners) and registration of deaths within a Local Authority area;
- support those doctors who call for medical advice on suspected natural causes of death before they prepare an MCCD, and provide general medical advice to the coroner;
- scrutinise the certified causes of all in-scope deaths in a way that is compliant with the proposed national protocol;
- maintain comprehensive records of all deaths scrutinised and undertake analysis and provide information as required to ONS & locally for clinical governance purposes;
- work with the any other local medical examiner(s) in LA/LHB or elsewhere to arrange reciprocal cover for holidays and other periods of absence and also to ensure that there is no potential conflict of interest between the medical examiner and the death being scrutinised;
- explain to bereaved relatives cause of death in a transparent, tactful and sympathetic manner, which respects different faith, cultural, ethnic and diversity considerations;

ME job description FINAL

- Support the training of junior doctors in completion of MCCDs and provide feedback on accuracy of certification locally.

[NOTE: the above list of duties is not exhaustive and is subject to LAs/LHBs refining the person specification and job description to meet local service needs]

MODEL JOB DESCRIPTION – MEDICAL EXAMINER (ME)

Knowledge, Skills and Performance - Scrutiny Duties

You will be expected to comply with national protocols to ensure that in each case the cause of death is scrutinised in a way that is robust, proportionate and consistent.

You must have up to date knowledge of medical conditions, treatments and medicines which may or may not have contributed to death, and be able to exercise judgement in where to seek specialist advice in order to determine the appropriate level of scrutiny required.

You must be able to distinguish between natural and unnatural causes of death and to decide where a death must be reported to, and investigated by, a coroner.

Additionally, you must have detailed knowledge of the relevant legislation and processes which apply to

- coroners and death certification;
- deaths abroad where bodies are returned to England and Wales for disposal; and;
- deaths where relatives wish to transport the body abroad for disposal;
- certifying and registering deaths; and the regulations to authorise cremation or burials of stillbirths abroad .

Your team will be responsible for maintaining comprehensive records in an appropriate format.

Knowledge, Skills & Performance - Accountability

You will have professional independence in scrutinising deaths but will be accountable to the employing organisation's Board/Director of Public Health for achieving agreed standards or levels of performance.

You will have regard to guidance issued by the National Medical Examiner when carrying out your ME functions.

Knowledge, Skills & Performance - Continuing Professional Development

You will be expected to take responsibility for your own continuing professional development and take part in continuing medical education activities, in accordance with any relevant standards for maintaining your GMC licence to practice and membership of any relevant professional body.

You will be committed to the concept of lifelong learning and produce and maintain a Personal Development Plan in agreement with your appraiser.

ME job description FINAL

You will be required to attend relevant local, and national activities in order to maintain up to date knowledge and to ensure compliance with legal and procedural requirements associated with the current processes of certification, investigation (by coroners) and registration.

Safety and Quality - Clinical Governance

You will be required to participate in any relevant governance activities relating to the scrutiny and confirmation of cause of death. This will include participating in audits and investigations where appropriate and responding to complaints within the PCT's expected timescale.

You will also be expected to

- take appropriate action where other governance issues are also identified during the scrutiny process;
- facilitate routine analysis of MCCD information to identify trends, patterns and unusual features of deaths and report as required by the LA/LHB;
- provide information, e.g. to Local Safeguarding Children Boards in respect of the deaths of all children in the LA/LHB area which are not investigated by the Coroner; and
- share relevant information with responsible officers for doctors to remedy sub-standard clinical performance to protect patients.

Communication, Partnership & Teamwork

You must be able to communicate with the bereaved of all faiths and communities in a sensitive and understanding manner.

You will be familiar with the role and function of the Coroner and able to present complex medical information in such a way as to assist the Coroner decide whether to investigate a death about which they have been notified.

You will liaise with those attending practitioners who seek advice prior to completing a Medical Certificate on the Cause of Death (where death is considered to be due to natural causes).

You will provide leadership for the effective management of the Medical Examiner's Office, including the supervision and development of any staff.

You will comply with the LA's/LHB's reciprocal arrangements with the other medical examiner(s) in the LA/LHB or neighbouring LA/LHB to provide cover for holidays and other commitments that would prevent completion of the scrutiny process within the prescribed timescales.

Maintaining Trust - Equality & Diversity

You will act in accordance with Equalities and Human Rights legislation and the organisation's Equality and Diversity policies.

Maintaining Trust – Independence

Medical Examiners must avoid any potential conflicts of interest. You will make arrangements to transfer to another ME the responsibility for the scrutiny of any death in which you have had a personal, professional or fiduciary relationship with the deceased person, the next-of-kin or near relative of the deceased, or with the attending doctor who prepared the MCCD.

Maintaining trust - Health and Safety

You be expected to fulfil any appropriate management and individual responsibilities in accordance with the organisation's Health and Safety policy and report as necessary, any untoward accident, incident or potentially hazardous environment. You will also promote and implement the LAs/LHBs Health and Safety policy.

Salary and Conditions of Service

Salary, hours and other conditions of service will be agreed between the ME and the employer.

Other Aspects of the Post/Additional Information

[Note: LA/LHB to add, as appropriate]

Proposed Work Programme/Job Plan

Detailed weekly timetable of activities

Any other programmed activities not captured above

On-call commitment

Note: LAs/LHBs will need to stipulate requirements for out-of-hours service and consider the need for reciprocal arrangements between different areas/services to ensure there is sufficient 'distance' between the medical examiner and the death been scrutinised.

External duties and additional NHS responsibilities

Summary of Programme Activities

Any other comments or agreements regarding job plan