

**Medical Certificates of Cause of Death & Bereavement Information  
for all In-patient Deaths during COVID-19**

**[Revised 07/10/20]**

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## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has required significant changes to processes after all deaths (including those from COVID-19 and other causes). Guidance regarding these changes has been issued by Scottish Government from the offices of the Chief Medical Office, Police Scotland and Procurator Fiscal Service.

## 2. Summary of Key Changes

### 2.1 For all inpatient deaths:

- The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) is **not collected** by next of kin.
- The MCCD is **scanned** and **emailed** to the Registration office along with next of kin details, and copied to the NHS Lothian Bereavement Service (as per process on page 6).
- The original MCCD is **posted** to Registration office.
- The Bereavement Service will **email** a copy of the MCCD to the next of kin, if they consent to receive this by non-secure email and if they email the Bereavement Service to request this.
- Bereavement information, including guidance on current registration arrangements, should be given, emailed or posted to next of kin (digital versions available).
- If there is a non COVID-19 related indication, to report the death to the procurator fiscal, **do so as normal**.

### 2.2 For COVID-19 inpatient deaths:

- Acceptable **terminology** for deaths due to COVID-19 is summarised under point 3 below
- The **DH1 hazards box** must be ticked
- Except for in the circumstances below, the Procurator Fiscal **does not** need to be notified of death due to COVID-19 if the infection is the only reason for referral – in such cases the box stating ‘this death has been reported to the procurator fiscal’ should **not** be ticked
- Deaths from COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 **must be reported** to the Procurator Fiscal (a) where the deceased was resident in a care home when the virus was contracted or (b) where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the deceased contracted the virus in the course of their employment or (c) where there is a non COVID-19 related indication to report the death to the Procurator Fiscal.

### 3. Completion of Death Certification - Terminology

Appropriate terminology is below.

<b>Name of Virus</b>	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)
<b>Name of Disease</b>	Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)
<b>What to write on death certificate</b> (You can use either of these)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 Disease</li> <li>• SARS-CoV-2 Infection</li> <li>• Pandemic COVID-19 Disease</li> </ul>
<b>Where death is likely due to COVID-19 but not confirmed, use:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presumed COVID-19 Disease</li> </ul>

There is often not a one hundred percent certainty when determining the cause of death; the certificate continues to be issued based upon the '*balance of probabilities*' or '*best of one's knowledge and belief*' (See **Appendix 1** for examples of how to complete the MCCD).

### 4. Notifiable Diseases and Reporting to the Procurator Fiscal (PF)

COVID-19 is a notifiable disease, therefore the DH1 hazards box on the MCCD/Form 11 should be answered 'Yes'.

However, there is a suspension on the requirement to report COVID-19 deaths to the Procurator Fiscal **except** in the circumstances below:

- (a) Where the deceased was resident in a care home (this includes residential homes for adults, the elderly and children) when the virus was contracted; or
- (b) Where to the best of the certifying doctor's knowledge, there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the deceased may have contracted the virus in the course of their employment or occupation. Whilst not exhaustive, this may include deaths of care home workers, frontline NHS staff, emergency services personnel and public transport workers; or
- (c) Where there is a non COVID-19 related indication for reporting the death to the PF (see below).

The standard indications for reporting to the PF are unchanged and these cases should still be referred:

Drugs related deaths	Certain child deaths
Accidental deaths	Deaths from other notifiable/ infectious diseases
Deaths as a result of an accident in the course of employment	Deaths under medical or dental care in the circumstances defined in section 3(e)
Deaths of children from overlaying or suffocation	Deaths while subject to compulsory treatment under the mental health

	legislation
Deaths where the circumstances indicate the possibility of suicide	Deaths in legal custody
Deaths as a result of neglect/fault	

## 5. New Process for Issuing the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) and Bereavement Information

### 5.1 Overview

Face-to-face death registration has been suspended and the process is completed remotely (by email and telephone).

**The most important change to note is that the next of kin should not be given the original paper copy of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD/Form 11).**

The Interim Chief Medical Officer has issued [guidance](#) stating that the signed certificate should be scanned and emailed to the registration office where the next of kin says they would like to register the death. This can be at any registration office in Scotland.

The Bereavement Service can email a copy of the certificate to the next of kin if they contact the service to request this.

The original signed MCCD should be posted to the registration office.

The process for doing this will differ between sites for those with staffed mortuaries and those without. The process for this is detailed in under point 5.2 and 5.3 and summarised by a **Flowchart in Appendix 2**. It is important to ensure that you are familiar with the process on your site.

[Supplementary guidance](#) from the Scottish Government provides further information about the process and addresses concerns about non-secure email communication with next of kin.

## 5.2 Death certification process at RIE, WGH and SJH

<b>A. Ward Process: Communication with family and completing documentation</b>	
<b>NEXT OF KIN SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN THE ORIGINAL COPY OF THE DEATH CERTIFICATE (MCCD)</b>	
If there are no known next of kin or in cases where next of kin are unwilling to make arrangements (for example family estrangement), please refer to the NHS Lothian Bereavement Service: 0131 242 6995 (ext 26995) or <a href="mailto:bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk">bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk</a>	
If next of kin are already present (e.g. visiting for end of life) then bereavement information can be given in person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>When Someone Has Died</b> pack and,</li><li>• <b>Registering a death in Edinburgh and the Lothians during the COVID-19 pandemic</b> (or <b>Rainbow Pack</b> equivalent for children's services) (supplementary information).</li></ul>	
The MCCD should still be sent to the Mortuary as per the process below.	
<b>1.</b>	Once the MCCD has been completed, an appropriate member of ward staff should contact next of kin to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Offer an explanation of the certified cause of death. (NB. This is especially important if next of kin is not going to receive a copy of the MCCD - see below).</li><li>b. Complete the Death Registration Form (<b>Appendix 3</b>):<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confirm which Registration Office next of kin intends to use.</li><li>• Confirm the contact details (email address and phone number) of the person who the registrar should contact to complete the death registration process.</li><li>• In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the next of kin to nominate another person to register the death (e.g. a close family member who knows the information to be registered and has better access to email or digital literacy skills) – in this case the nominated person should be contacted to confirm their details and agreement to share these with the registration office.</li><li>• Ask the next of kin if they wish to receive a scanned copy of the MCCD by email. If they do, inform them that during the COVID-19 pandemic the MCCD can only be sent to them by normal email route without any additional security around it. If they choose <u>not</u> to have the MCCD emailed, advise them that unfortunately they will not be able to view the contents of the MCCD prior to registration. However it is important to note that the scanned MCCD would be for information only - they would not need to do anything with it and it cannot be used to deal with the estate (closing bank accounts etc). Once registration is completed the</li></ul></li></ol>

	<p>registrar will send them the final 'death certificate' which they may need to deal with such matters.</p> <p>c. If next of kin <b>does</b> wish to receive the scanned MCCD by email, <b>they must send an email to <a href="mailto:bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk">bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk</a></b> (with the deceased's name and DOB as the subject line) to ensure that we have the correct email address – only when we receive this email from the next of kin will we be able to reply with a copy of the scanned MCCD once it is available. This is an information governance requirement.</p> <p>d. If the next of kin <b>does not</b> have an email address or does not wish to receive a scanned MCCD by email, they must be given the MCCD serial number as a reference, and advised that the registration office will contact them in due course using the contact details they have given.</p>
2.	Document on TRAK: discussion with next of kin and agreement (or not) to receive MCCD by non-secure email.
3.	<p>Before taking MCCD to mortuary – final check for any common errors which would make it inadmissible. Most common are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part A: Date of birth / date of death transposed</li> <li>• Part B: MCCD not signed</li> <li>• Part C: Abbreviations used in cause of death (except SARS-COV-2 or HIV/AIDs which are permitted)</li> <li>• Approximate interval boxes ticked (they should have numbers - left blank is not ideal but can be accepted)</li> <li>• Part D: Boxes DH1-3 not ticked for Y or N</li> <li>• Part E: Box PM1, 2 or 3 and / or Box A1, 2 or 3 not ticked</li> </ul>
4.	Once the MCCD and Death Registration Form are both completed these must be delivered promptly to the mortuary in person during working hours Mon-Fri 8am-1pm, 2pm- 4pm.

<b>B. Mortuary Process: Scanning and sending information</b>	
1.	Scan both sides of the MCCD and Death Registration Form (as 2 separate documents) and save as PDF files in a locally agreed location. An agreed naming convention should be used for saved files. This enables easy management, compliance with GDPR and subsequent clean up after the temporary measures cease.
2.	<p>Email the scanned MCCD and Death Registration Form from generic NHS Lothian email address to the appropriate registration service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The email subject line should be the deceased's full name to make it easier for registrars to manage incoming emails.</li> <li>• Copy the email to the NHS Lothian Bereavement Service <a href="mailto:bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk">bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk</a></li> </ul>

<b>3.</b>	Post original copy of MCCD to the appropriate registration office.
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<b>C. Bereavement Service Process: Communication with next of kin</b>	
<b>1.</b>	Upon receipt of an incoming email from the next of kin, the Bereavement Service will reply to them attaching the scanned MCCD and PDF/link to bereavement information leaflet (see Appendix 3).
<b>2.</b>	Any replies/incoming enquiries from bereaved families can then be followed up and appropriate support offered by the Bereavement Service Coordinators.

### 5.3 Death certification process at inpatient sites WITHOUT staffed mortuary

<b>A. Ward Process: Communication with family and completing and sending documentation</b>	
<b>NEXT OF KIN SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN THE ORIGINAL COPY OF THE DEATH CERTIFICATE (MCCD)</b>	
<p>If there are no known next of kin or in cases (e.g. family estrangement) where next of kin are unwilling to make arrangements, please refer to the NHS Lothian Bereavement Service: 0131 242 6995 (ext 26995) or <a href="mailto:bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk">bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk</a></p>	
<p>If next of kin are already present (e.g. visiting for end of life) then bereavement information can be given in person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>When Someone Has Died</b> pack and,</li> <li>• <b>Registering a death in Edinburgh and the Lothians during the COVID-19 pandemic</b> (or <b>Rainbow Pack</b> equivalent for children's services) (supplementary information).</li> </ul> <p>The MCCD should still be sent to the Mortuary as per the process below.</p>	
1.	<p>Once the MCCD has been completed, an appropriate member of ward staff should contact next of kin to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Offer an explanation of the certified cause of death. (NB. This is especially important if next of kin is not going to receive a copy of the MCCD - see below).</li> <li>b. Complete the Death Registration Form (Appendix 2): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm which Registration Office next of kin intends to use.</li> <li>• Confirm the contact details (email address and phone number) of the person who the registrar should contact to complete the death registration process.</li> <li>• In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the next of kin to nominate another person to register the death (e.g. a close family member who knows the information to be registered and has better access to email or digital literacy skills) – in this case the nominated person should be contacted to confirm their details and agreement to share these with the registration office.</li> <li>• Ask the next of kin if they wish to receive a scanned copy of the MCCD by email. If they do, inform them that during the COVID-19 pandemic the MCCD can only be sent to them by normal email route without any additional security around it. If they choose <u>not</u> to have the MCCD emailed, advise them that unfortunately they will not be able to view the contents of the MCCD prior to registration. However it is important to note that the scanned MCCD would be for information only - they would not need to do anything with it and it cannot be used to deal with the estate</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

	<p>(closing bank accounts etc). Once registration is completed the registrar will send them the final 'death certificate' which they may need to deal with such matters.</p> <p>c. If next of kin <b>does</b> wish to receive the scanned MCCD by email, <b>they must send an email to <a href="mailto:bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk">bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk</a></b> (with the deceased's name and DOB as the subject line) to ensure that we have the correct email address – only when we receive this email from the NOK will we be able to reply with a copy of the scanned MCCD once it is available. This is an information governance requirement.</p> <p>d. If the next of kin <b>does not</b> have an email address or does not wish to receive a scanned MCCD by email, they must be given the MCCD serial number as a reference, and advised that the registration office will contact them in due course using the contact details they have given.</p>
2.	Document on TRAK: discussion with next of kin and agreement (or not) to receive MCCD by non-secure email.
3.	<p>Before scanning and sending MCCD – final check for any common errors which would make it inadmissible. Most common are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part A: Date of birth / date of death transposed</li> <li>• Part B: MCCD not signed</li> <li>• Part C: Abbreviations used in cause of death (except SARS-COV-2 or HIV/AIDs which are permitted)</li> <li>• Approximate interval boxes ticked (they should have numbers - left blank is not ideal but can be accepted)</li> <li>• Part D: Boxes DH1-3 not ticked for Y or N</li> <li>• Part E: Box PM1, 2 or 3 and / or Box A1, 2 or 3 not ticked</li> </ul>
4.	Scan both sides of the MCCD and Death Registration Form (as 2 separate documents) and save as PDF files in a locally agreed location. An agreed naming convention should be used for saved files. This enables easy management, compliance with GDPR and subsequent clean up after the temporary measures cease.
5.	<p>Email the scanned MCCD and Death Registration Form (ideally from a generic rather than personal NHS Lothian email address) to the appropriate registration service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The email subject line should be the deceased's full name to make it easier for registrars to manage incoming emails.</li> <li>• Copy the email to the NHS Lothian Bereavement Service <a href="mailto:bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk">bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk</a>.</li> </ul>
6.	Post original copy of MCCD to the appropriate registration office.

**B. Bereavement Service Process: Communication with next of kin**

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | Upon receipt of an incoming email from the next of, the Bereavement Service will reply to them attaching the scanned MCCD and PDF/link to bereavement information leaflet (see <b>Appendix 4</b> ). |
| 2. | Any replies / incoming enquiries from bereaved families can then be followed up and appropriate support offered by the Bereavement Service Coordinators.  |

## APPENDIX 1: Example MCCDs

### Example 1

The patient clearly had symptoms of COVID-19 and was confirmed positive

PART C - CAUSE OF DEATH			
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY IN BLOCK CAPITALS AND DO NOT ABBREVIATE			
I Disease or condition directly leading to death *	Approximate interval between onset and death		
	Years	Months	Days
(a) <i>Multiorgan failure</i>			3
<b>Antecedent causes</b> – Morbid conditions, if any, giving rise to the above cause, stating the underlying condition last			
due to (or as a consequence of)			
(b) <i>Acute respiratory distress syndrome</i>			5
due to (or as a consequence of)			
(c) <i>Pandemic COVID-19 Disease</i>			7
due to (or as a consequence of)			
(d)			
<b>II Other significant conditions</b> contributing to the death, but not related to the disease or condition causing it			
<i>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</i>	15		
<i>Chronic kidney disease stage 4</i>	5		

\* This does not mean mode of dying, such as heart or respiratory failure; it means the disease, injury or complication that caused death.

### Example 2

The patient was confirmed COVID-19 positive, but there were other issues and so this was not the main cause of deterioration and death

PART C - CAUSE OF DEATH			
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY IN BLOCK CAPITALS AND DO NOT ABBREVIATE			
I Disease or condition directly leading to death *	Approximate interval between onset and death		
	Years	Months	Days
(a) <i>Myocardial infarction</i>			2
<b>Antecedent causes</b> – Morbid conditions, if any, giving rise to the above cause, stating the underlying condition last			
due to (or as a consequence of)			
(b) <i>Ischaemic heart disease</i>	5		
due to (or as a consequence of)			
(c)			
due to (or as a consequence of)			
(d)			
<b>II Other significant conditions</b> contributing to the death, but not related to the disease or condition causing it			
<i>SARS-CoV-2 infection</i>			7
<i>Hypertension</i>	15		

\* This does not mean mode of dying, such as heart or respiratory failure; it means the disease, injury or complication that caused death.

### Example 3

There may be very little background or diagnostic information on which to base a judgement (more relevant for GPs or community deaths).

PART C - CAUSE OF DEATH			
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY IN BLOCK CAPITALS AND DO NOT ABBREVIATE			
I Disease or condition directly leading to death *	Approximate interval between onset and death		
	Years	Months	Days
(a) <i>Presumed COVID-19 disease</i>			7
<b>Antecedent causes</b> – Morbid conditions, if any, giving rise to the above cause, stating the underlying condition last			
due to (or as a consequence of)			
(b)			
due to (or as a consequence of)			
(c)			
due to (or as a consequence of)			
(d)			
<b>II Other significant conditions</b> contributing to the death, but not related to the disease or condition causing it			
<i>Alcoholic liver cirrhosis</i>	7		
<i>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</i>	12		

\* This does not mean mode of dying, such as heart or respiratory failure; it means the disease, injury or complication that caused death.

### Example 4

When it is not possible to reach a conclusion “on the balance of probabilities”

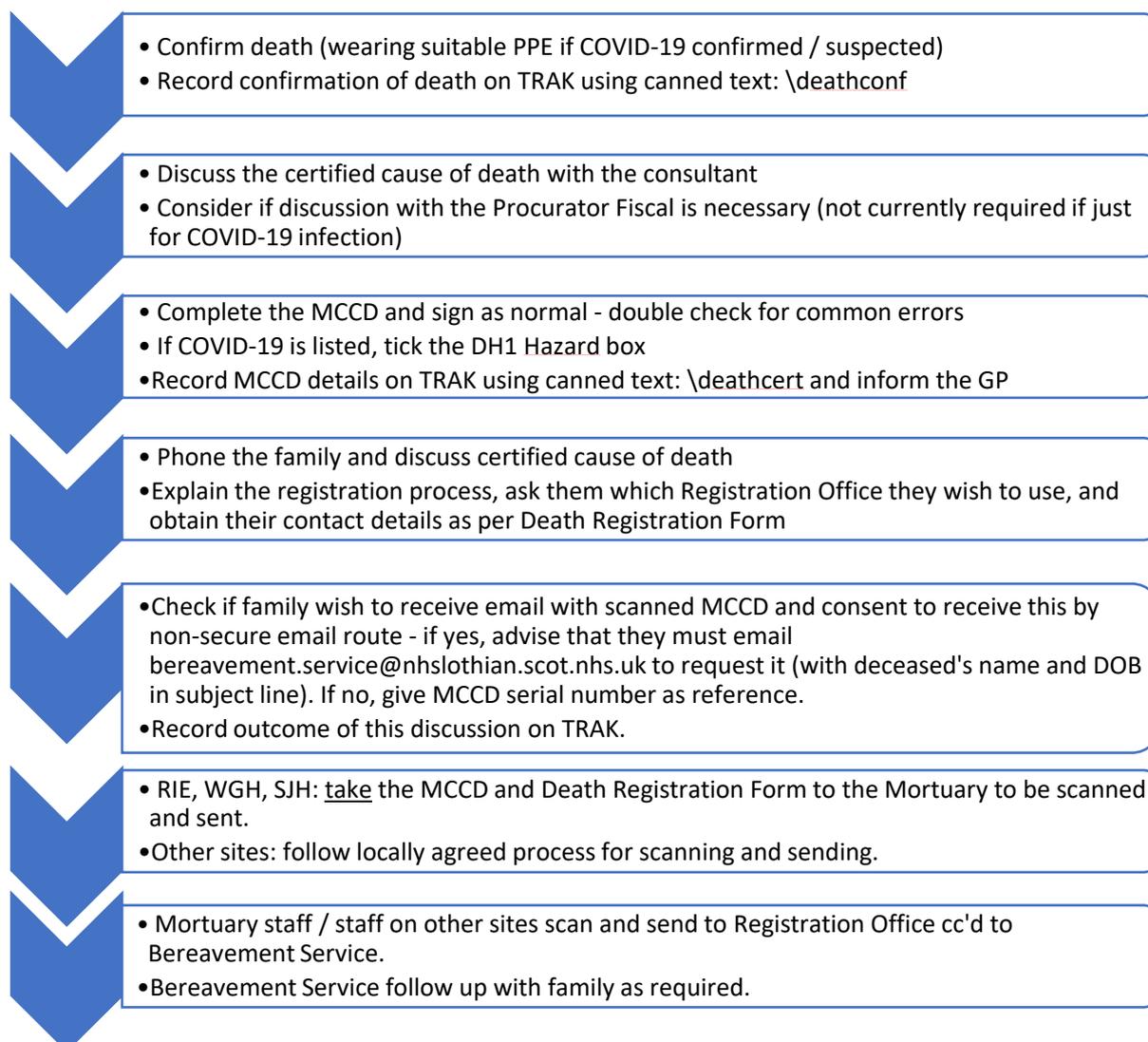
The case should be discussed with PF

Email: SFIUEast@copfs.gov.uk  
 Direct line for Edinburgh: 0131 243 3312  
 General number: 0844 561 4110  
<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/investigating-deaths/deathss>

This could lead to:

- A conclusion of “Presumed COVID-19 disease”
- An investigation
- A post mortem

## APPENDIX 2: Flowchart for Process for Completing and Issuing the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) and Bereavement Information



## DEATH REGISTRATION FORM FOR ALL IN-PATIENT DEATHS

To be completed following completion of MCCD and discussion with NOK

All deaths are currently being registered remotely, please do not issue MCCD to NOK

<b>HOSPITAL/WARD</b>	<b>Attach addressograph label or complete below:</b>			
	NAME OF DECEASED			
<b>DATE OF DEATH</b>	ADDRESS			
	CHI			
<b>Has the next of kin been contacted and informed of the certified cause of death and the current process for registering the death?</b>				
YES		If NO KNOWN NEXT OF KIN refer to <b>bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk</b>		
<b>Which Registration Service will the next of kin be using to remotely register the death?</b> (Death can be registered in any local authority registration office in Scotland)				
City of Edinburgh	East Lothian	Midlothian	West Lothian	Out with Lothian (please specify)
<b>What are the contact details for the person (NOK) who will register the death?</b>				
Name				
Relationship to deceased				
Email address				
Telephone number(s)				
<b>Does the next of kin wish a scanned copy of the MCCD to be sent to them by email and consent to this being sent via non-secure route?</b>				
YES		NO		
<b>If yes</b> , advise NOK they must send an email to <b>bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk</b> with their relative's full name and DOB as the subject line to request this.  Tick to confirm <input type="checkbox"/>		<b>If no</b> , please give NOK the serial number of the MCCD for reference and advise them that the registrar will contact them in due course using the contact details above.  Tick to confirm <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Have NOK been given a bereavement information pack and supplementary leaflet on registering death during COVID-19 pandemic? Yes / No</b>				
<b>Any other relevant information or needs?</b>				
<b>STAFF NAME</b>	<b>STAFF SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>		
<b>Contact no:</b>				

**RIE, WGH & SJH: HAND DELIVER THIS FORM AND THE ORIGINAL MCCD TO THE MORTUARY  
OPENING HOURS: MON-FRI 8AM -1PM, 2PM-4PM**

**OTHER SITES: WARD STAFF SCAN AND SEND THIS COMPLETED FORM & THE MCCD TO CHOSEN  
REGISTRATION OFFICE. CC BEREAVEMENT SERVICE AND DOCUMENT ON REVERSE**

## RECORD OF SCANNING AND EMAILING TO REGISTRARS OFFICE

ACTION	NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
MCCD and this form received by Mortuary / other sites			
MCCD and this form scanned and emailed to Reg Office & cc'd to Bereavement Service			
Any other comments			

### REMEMBER

1. Email to registration office must be sent from an NHS Lothian email account (@nhslothian, @luht, etc). An NHS.net account should not be used as this is not a secure email transmission route. Scanned MCCD must be sent in PDF format.
2. Remember to cc. the NHS Lothian Bereavement Service into the email to the registration office: bereavement.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk
3. When sending email to the registration office the subject line should be the full name of the deceased person.

### EMAIL AND POSTAL ADDRESSES TO SEND MCCDS

#### City of Edinburgh Council

registrars.city@edinburgh.gov.uk  
Registration Office  
The Quadrangle  
253 High Street  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1YP

#### East Lothian Council

haddingtonregistrars@eastlothian.gov.uk  
Registration Office  
John Gray Centre  
15 Lodge Street  
Haddington  
EH41 3DX

#### Midlothian Council

registrar@midlothian.gov.uk  
Registration Office  
Fairfield House  
8 Lothian Rd  
Dalkeith  
EH22 3AA

#### West Lothian Council

registration@westlothian.gov.uk  
Registration Office  
Civic Centre  
Howden South Road  
Livingston  
EH54 6FF

Contact details for registration offices in other areas can be found at:

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/registration/RegOfficeContacts.pdf>

## APPENDIX 4: Supplementary bereavement information leaflets

Standard bereavement information resources are the ***When Someone Has Died*** pack for adult deaths and the ***Rainbow Pack*** for children's services.

The NHS Lothian Bereavement Service has produced a supplementary information leaflet on ***Registering a death in Edinburgh and the Lothians during the COVID-19 pandemic*** to accompany the bereavement information pack ***When Someone Has Died*** which should be offered to all families when an adult inpatient has died (hard copy if NOK are present, PDF if not). ***Rainbow Pack*** versions of this information have also been created for Children's Services and the Neonatal Unit.

Information resources can be found on the NHS Lothian website at:  
<https://services.nhsllothian.scot/BereavementService/Pages/Information.aspx>

For further information about information resources, please contact:  
[bereavement.service@nhsllothian.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:bereavement.service@nhsllothian.scot.nhs.uk)