



Dear Colleague

## ELECTRONIC REPORTING OF DEATHS TO THE PROCURATOR FISCAL

### Purpose

1. This letter is to inform you that the Electronic Reporting of Deaths to the Procurator Fiscal will be rolled out by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), and NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) to NHSScotland and hospices in phases, from **18 March 2015**.

2. In the initial phase, it will be rolled out to all GP practices in Scotland using the existing SCI gateway referral system. Roll out to hospitals, GP out of hours services and hospices will be in subsequent phases. Owing to the IT infrastructure that requires to be used in hospitals, this development will be aligned with the development of the electronic completion of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (eMCCD). Further information for hospitals and hospices will be provided in due course.

### Background

3. The Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit (SFIU) of the COPFS and NSS have developed jointly a more efficient electronic reporting process to make the reporting of deaths less bureaucratic and time consuming. This provides better outcomes for bereaved relatives, medical practitioners and SFIU staff.

4. Current reporting methods vary across Scotland, with the majority of the reporting done by telephone. The overall process takes a significant amount of time for NHSScotland, hospices and SFIU staff in getting the appropriate information for each death reported. This can impact on relatives of the deceased at a particularly difficult time for them, as well as impacting significantly on the resources of the organisations involved.

**From the Acting Chief Medical  
Officer  
Dr Aileen Keel CBE  
Crown Agent and Chief  
Executive  
Catherine Dyer**

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#### Enquiries to:

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal  
Service issues  
David Green  
Head of the Scottish Fatalities  
Investigation Unit (SFIU) COPFS  
[Laura.Docherty@copfs.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Laura.Docherty@copfs.gsi.gov.uk)

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24 February 2015

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SGHD/CMO(2015) 3

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#### Addresses

##### For action

NHS Board Medical Directors – to  
cascade to all doctors, including GPs  
NHS Board and Special Board Chief  
Executives

##### For information

NHS Board Directors of Public Health  
NHS Board and Special Board Chairs  
NHS Board Primary Care Leads  
Bereavement Co-ordinators of Health  
Boards  
Medical Records Managers  
British Medical Association  
General Medical Council  
Medical and Dental Defence Union of  
Scotland  
Medical Protection Society  
Medical Defence Union  
Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and  
Faculties in Scotland  
COPFS – to cascade to Forensic  
Pathologists  
Community Hospitals  
Hospices  
Independent hospitals  
Police Scotland

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#### Further Enquiries

##### For clinical issues

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##### For IT issues

Jonathan Cameron  
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5. The new electronic reporting will utilise existing IT applications and infrastructure for the secure electronic transfer of information between NHSScotland, hospices and SFIU.

6. Doctors working in the private sector wishing to report deaths should continue to contact the relevant SFIU team by telephone at which time the report may be taken by telephone or they may be asked to complete a form eF5 and email this to SFIU. Any other individual with concerns about a death may contact SFIU by telephone or in writing with details of their concerns.

## Transitional Arrangements

7. The programme for this development has been in place for over a year, with input from clinicians. Part of the work of the programme has included piloting the process in a number of hospices in several Health Board areas.

8. In addition, some GPs in North Lanarkshire have been submitting the reports as an attachment to an email. SFIU offices in the North of Scotland have also adopted this email method as an interim method to the electronic solution.

9. As the electronic reporting method is rolled out to the various parts of NHSScotland, reporting doctors will be expected to submit reports electronically via Form eF5. Decisions made by the PF or requests for additional information will be communicated to the reporting doctor as an electronic alert, supported by a telephone call. **A copy of the form eF5 is in Annex A.**

10. Where the electronic route via Form eF5 is not available, current local arrangements will continue (telephone and email reporting), until such time as the preferred route (electronic) is available.

11. The intention is to replace telephone and email submissions to the Procurator Fiscal (PF) as soon as the organisations in each Health Board have access to the electronic solution. **A flowchart to explain the process is in Annex B.**

12. ***It is important to note that this development does not exclude the opportunity for a doctor to contact SFIU by telephone for advice on whether a death needs to be reported to the PF.*** Subsequently, where SFIU decide that a report is necessary, they will also advise on the reporting method, appropriate to the circumstances. The link to the new COPFS guidance for Medical Practitioners on reporting deaths is attached below for ease of reference. The guidance can be found under the header of '**Reporting Deaths to the Procurator Fiscal**' section. <http://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/deaths>

## Training

13. Training support for reporting to the PF will be through existing channels as advised by clinicians on the programme steering group. **For example**, the SCI Gateway training guide, "Working with COPFS messages for clinicians" is available to GP practices, as well as other materials such as laminated sheets, to address local circumstances. IT facilitators are also in place to train any new users in primary care.

14. The sections addressing reporting to PF in the guidance for doctors on how to complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death, published by Scottish Government and National

Records of Scotland in 2014, may also be helpful. The guidance is available through the link below.

[http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO\(2014\)27.pdf](http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO(2014)27.pdf)

***(please note that the link to the COPFS guidance in the document has been superseded by the link provided in paragraph 12).***

## **Action**

15. We would be grateful if you could raise awareness of the roll out of the electronic reporting of relevant deaths to the Procurator Fiscal in your areas. Your co-operation and assistance in ensuring a smooth transition to the new electronic reporting system of relevant deaths to the COPFS is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

*Aileen Keel*

*Catherine Dyer*

**DR AILEEN KEEL CBE**

**CATHERINE DYER**

## Copy of the eF5 Form for reporting death electronically to the Procurator Fiscal

<b>NOTIFICATION OF DEATH</b>		<b>Form eF5</b>
<b>Reported by</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>Contact details</b> (telephone number + page)	«Next Record»	
<b>Please provide details of who to contact if doctor reporting death is unavailable</b> (name and telephone number)	«Next Record»	
<b>Supervising consultant and secretary or GP Practice Manager</b> (Name and telephone number)	«Next Record»	
<b>PARTICULARS OF DECEASED</b>		
<b>Full name</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>Age</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>Date of birth</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>Address</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>Locus of death</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>Date &amp; time life pronounced extinct</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>General Practitioner</b> (name + address + telephone number)	«Next Record»	
<b>Are you aware of any religious/ cultural preferences in relation to the deceased?</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>NEAREST RELATIVE(S)</b> (i.e. Next of Kin or point of contact)		
<b>Name</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>Relationship to deceased</b>	«Next Record»	
<b>Special Needs</b> eg Interpreter	«Next Record»	
<b>Address and telephone number including mobile number of nearest relative(s)</b>	«Next Record»	

<b>REASON FOR REPORTING DEATH</b>	
<b>Reason for reporting the death to the Procurator Fiscal</b> (see 'Reporting Deaths to the Procurator Fiscal: Information and guidance for Medical Practitioners' – <i>hyperlink to guidance</i> )	
<b>HISTORY</b>	
<b>Relevant past medical history and relevant medication</b> (Please do not use medical acronyms; include prescribed medication and any alcohol/illicit drug abuse history; consider the need for Yellow Card Scheme reporting)	
<b>Summary of main events prior to death</b> (where relevant please provide: date of admission; changes in medication; details of any procedures/ operations; details of any adverse incidents. Where available please include copies of any relevant discharge summaries; operation notes; etc)	
<b>Please provide details of any specific clinical questions/concerns to be addressed</b> (this information will assist the pathologist in the event of a post mortem examination being instructed by the Procurator Fiscal)	
<b>Have the circumstances of the death been discussed with nearest relatives?</b>	«Next Record»
<b>Name of person who discussed death with nearest relatives</b>	«Next Record»
<b>Date of discussion</b>	«Next Record»
<b>Have nearest relatives expressed any concerns about the circumstances surrounding the death?</b> (If yes, please specify)	«Next Record»

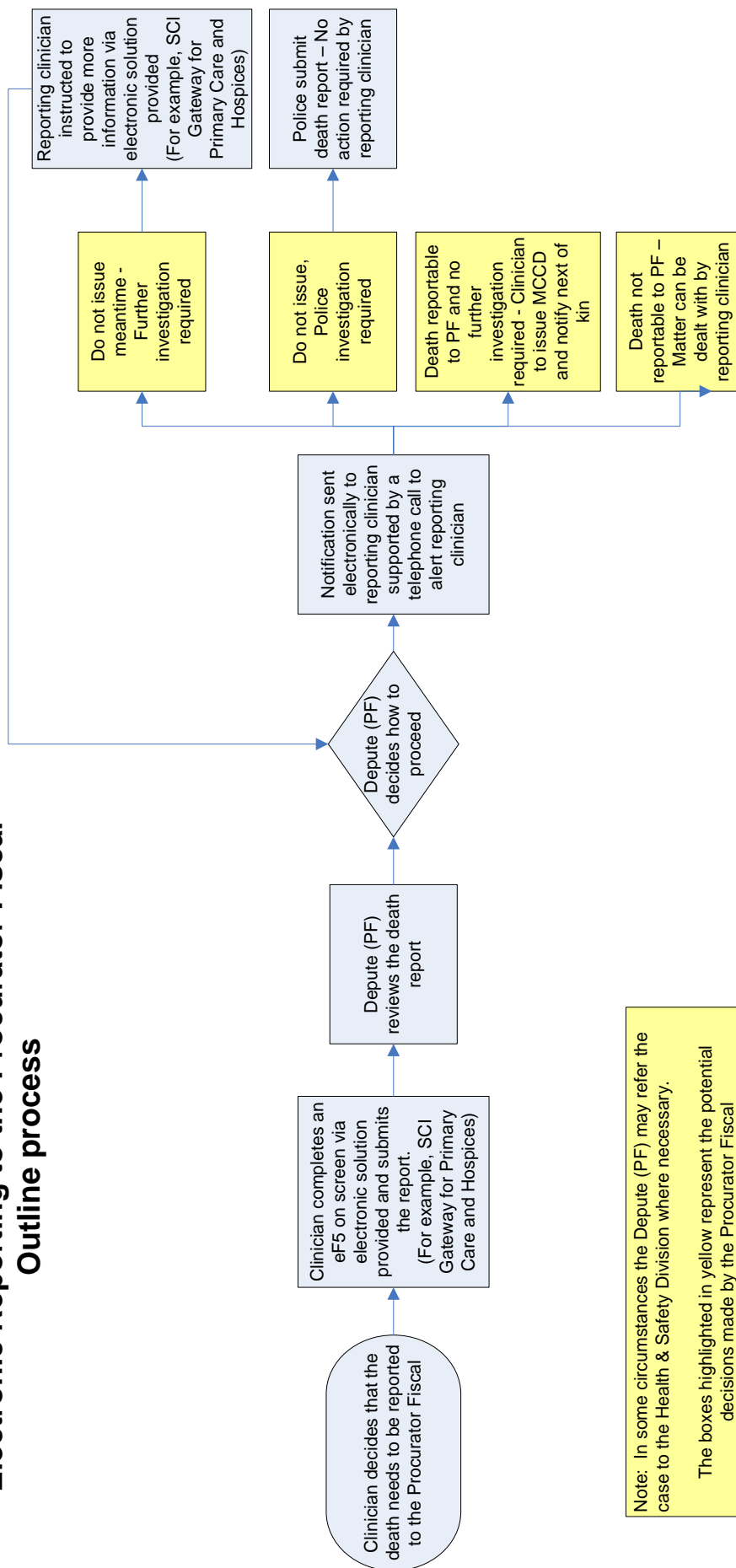
<b>Have nearest relatives been advised that the death will be reported to Procurator Fiscal?</b>	«Next Record»
<b>Have you any concerns? (Please list)</b>	«Next Record»
<b>Willing or unwilling to issue death certificate. If unwilling please explain why not</b>	«Next Record»
<b>Cause of death if certification being offered.</b>	1(a) «Next Record» 1 (b) «Next Record» 1 (c) «Next Record»  II «Next Record»
<b>If certification is not being offered please provide the presumed cause of death in general terms, if known</b>	«Next Record»
<b>Certifying doctor</b>	«Next Record»
<b>Is this a suspected asbestosis/ mesothelioma death?</b> (If YES the Mesothelioma pro forma Part 3 must be completed and submitted to the PF)	«Next Record»

**For PF Office Use Only**

<b>PF to whom reported</b>	«Next Record»
<b>PF instructions</b> (remember to request medical records; admission/ pre-transfusion blood samples if applicable)	«Next Record»
<b>Date of PF instructions</b>	



## Electronic Reporting to the Procurator Fiscal Outline process



Note: In some circumstances the Depute (PF) may refer the case to the Health & Safety Division where necessary.  
The boxes highlighted in yellow represent the potential decisions made by the Procurator Fiscal