

## **DHSC Model Job Description for Medical Examiners**

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| Job Title:      | Medical Examiner   |
| Remuneration:   | Incorporated into job plan at standard programme activity rate |
| Responsible to: | Lead Medical Examiner for the region                           |
| Reports to:     | Medical Director in the employing organisation                 |

### **Context**

This post has been created by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in response to observations made in the Third Report of the Shipman Inquiry. The introduction of the medical examiner system will promote robust, transparent and independent scrutiny of death certification processes.

### **Dimensions of role**

Medical examiners (MEs) are appropriately trained doctors who will verify clinical information on Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCDs) and ensure that the right referrals are made to the coroner for further investigation. A practising medical practitioner who has been on the general medical council register for a minimum of five years post registration can apply to be a medical examiner. It is recommended that medical examiners are consultant grade doctors from a range of disciplines (including GP principals). MEs will take a consistent approach to the formulation of MCCD content, which must be clinically accurate and reflect any discussions with the next of kin/informant. MEs must not have been involved in the care of the deceased patients for deaths they scrutinise.

### **Main duties**

- To ensure compliance with the legal and procedural requirements associated with the current and proposed reformed processes of certification, investigation by coroners and registration of deaths.
- To scrutinise the certified causes of death offered by attending doctors in a way that is proportionate, consistent and compliant with the proposed national protocol.
- To discuss and explain the cause of death with next of kin/informants in a transparent, tactful and sympathetic manner. It is anticipated that such discussions will be predominately conducted through telephone conversations where barriers to understanding information may exist.
- To ensure that all users of the ME system are treated with respect and are not discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability.
- To maintain comprehensive records of all deaths scrutinised and undertake analysis to provide information to the National Medical Examiner's office.

- To participate in relevant clinical governance activities relating to death certification including audits, mortality review processes and investigations regarding formal complaints about patient care.
- To support the training of junior doctors in their understanding of death certification and promote good practice in accurate completion of MCCDs.
- To work with medical examiner officers (MEOs), delegating duties as appropriate.
- To engage with lead ME and lead MEO for the region.
- To adopt a collaborative working relationship with other MEs by sharing experiences and expertise to support peer learning and set uniform standards of service delivery.

### **Organisational chart [delegated locally to employing organisation]**

#### **Knowledge and skills required for post**

##### **Qualifications**

Registered with a licence to practice in the UK by the GMC.

As a pre-condition of practicing, an ME must have successfully completed the mandatory components of the national online medical examiner curriculum. Face-to-face training must be completed within the first three months of being in post.

##### **Behavioural attributes**

MEs should be aware of how their personal communication style impacts on others and be able to adapt their approach to suit a variety of situations and audiences. This will require:

- Highly evolved self-awareness and empathetic skills to liaise effectively and sympathetically with bereaved families
- The ability to demonstrate and combine appropriate levels of compassion with professionalism and discretion
- Being open to constructive criticism, ideas and solutions
- Acting as a positive role model and interacting appropriately with all stakeholders including MEOs, other MEs, the bereaved and the coroner
- Having the integrity to gain trust and comply with the independent nature of the ME role in the context of other clinical specialty duties.

#### **Performance criteria**

##### **Communications and key working relationships**

To be a source of expert knowledge and advice for health professionals and wider stakeholder groups; these include:

Internal within own organisation:

- Medical Director
- All grades of clinicians
- Clinical governance leads
- MEOs and bereavement service staff
- Mortuary staff.

External:

- Coroners and their officers
- Registrar of births and deaths
- Local Authorities, including care homes and safeguarding teams
- Spiritual and faith community leaders
- Other health care providers to including GPs
- Lead MEs and lead MEOs
- National Medical Examiner.

### **Knowledge**

MEs must have up-to-date knowledge of medical conditions and treatments and be able to exercise judgement about when to seek specialist advice.

MEs must have detailed knowledge of the relevant legislation and processes which apply to:

- The determination of whether a death is natural or unnatural
- Deaths that must be reported to the coroner
- Deaths abroad where bodies are returned to England and Wales for disposal
- 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.

### **Accountability**

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

MEs will have an independent professional line of accountability to a regional structure of NHS Improvement/NHS England outside the employing organisation and immediate line management structure.

MEs will comply with guidance issued by the National Medical Examiner when carrying out ME duties.

## **Safety and Quality – Clinical Governance**

MEs will be required to participate in any relevant governance activities relating to scrutiny and confirmation of the cause of death where concerns have been raised by the next of kin/informant of the deceased and/or clinical staff and ME scrutiny.

MEs will facilitate routine analysis of MCCD information to identify trends, patterns and unusual features of deaths and report, as required, firstly to the regional Lead ME and ultimately to the National Medical Examiner's office.

MEs will provide information to local Child Death Overview panels in respect of all child deaths which are not being investigated by the coroner.

## **Maintaining Trust**

### Equality and Diversity

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

### Independence

MEs must avoid any potential conflicts of interest. In cases where they have a personal or professional relationship with the deceased person, next of kin/informant, or with the attending doctor preparing the MCCD, they must transfer any scrutiny of the death to another ME.

## **Continuing professional development**

MEs are expected to take responsibility for their own continuing professional development in accordance with any standards for maintaining a GMC licence to practice and membership of any relevant professional body. The ME role should be included in the whole practice appraisal.

MEs should maintain a Personal Development Plan in agreement with their appraiser.

There will be opportunities to attend local and national activities to maintain up to date knowledge.

## **Working Conditions:**

MEs may need to use a computer for prolonged periods of time. The ME system operates within a reactive area of service delivery interacting with people in variable degrees of distress and demonstrating potentially irrational/unpredictable behaviour.

## Person Specification for Medical Examiner

| Requirements  | Essential/<br>Desirable | Assessment<br>Method       |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Knowledge, Skills and Performance</b>  |                         |                            |
| Medical practitioner registered and licensed to practise in the UK by the GMC.  | Essential               | Application form           |
| A commitment to life-long learning and undertaking personal development opportunities.  | Essential               | Interview                  |
| Candidates must have successfully completed the mandatory e-learning modules by the time they start the role. Candidates must attend a face-to-face training session within the first three months in post. | Essential               | Application form/interview |
| MEs should have up-to-date knowledge of causes of death and an understanding of the legal frameworks associated with death certification processes.   | Essential               | Application form/Interview |
| IT skills including use of email and commonly used software.  | Essential               | Application form           |
| Ability to manage and comply with sensitive information-based processes under tight timescales with a proportionate approach.   | Essential               | Interview                  |
| Knowledge of the special requirements of various faith groups and respect for equality and diversity  | Essential               | Application form/Interview |

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| <b>Safety and Quality – Clinical Governance</b>   |           |                            |
| Knowledge of local and national clinical governance systems and an understanding of how the ME can work collaboratively to improve patient safety by identifying sub-optimal clinical and organisational performance. | Essential | Application form/interview |
| Ability to identify available data sources to support the detection and analysis of concerns and to recognise gaps in available knowledge.  | Essential | Interview                  |
| Ability to identify and disseminate examples of good practice amongst relevant colleagues.  | Essential | Interview                  |

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| <b>Communication and teamwork</b>  |           |           |
| Strong interpersonal skills demonstrating the ability to communicate in difficult and emotional situations with empathy and professionalism. | Essential | Interview |
| Ability to work effectively and efficiently within own team and also closely with people in other disciplines                                | Essential | Interview |
| Ability to work as part of a team and organise a fluctuating workload around competing priorities and numerous interruptions.                | Essential | Interview |
| <b>Personal qualities and behavioural attributes</b>   |           |           |
| Proactive and self-motivated with a flexible working approach  | Essential | Interview |

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| <b>Personal qualities and behavioural attributes</b>   | Essential | Interview |
| Have the resilience to manage own reaction to frequently distressing situations and support others within the team.                    | Essential | Interview |
| To sustain professional integrity and independence at all times, particularly where there is the potential for a conflict of interest. | Essential | Interview |