

**HSS(MD)15/2026**

**For Action:**

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/HSC  
Trusts/NIAS

Medical Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to  
all Medical Practitioners and midwives*)

GP Medical Advisers, SPPG

Tracey McCaig, Chief Operating Officer, SPPG

All General Practitioners and GP Locums (*for onward  
distribution to practice staff and Community  
Pharmacies*)

OOH Medical Managers (*for onward distribution to  
staff*)

Louise McMahan, Director of Primary Care-HSC, SPPG

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Our Ref: HSS(MD)15/2026

Date: 25 March 2026

**PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION LIST**

Dear Colleague

**UPDATE TO ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE COMPLETION AND ISSUING OF MEDICAL  
CERTIFICATES OF CAUSE OF DEATH AND STILL BIRTH CERTIFICATES**

**Introduction**

The following information sets out the permanent legal framework for how Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCDs) are completed and issued to the General Register Office and outlines the legally approved means by which MCCDs may be signed electronically.

It also sets out the new email address which medical practitioners and midwives should send completed MCCDs and stillbirth certificates to from 23 March 2026.

**Action required**

Chief Executives must ensure that this information is drawn to the attention of all clinical staff to enable them to respond accordingly.

The Director of Integrated Care, DoH must ensure that this information is cascaded to all General Practitioners and OOH facilities immediately.

## Background

Following the introduction of emergency legislation in March 2020 through the Coronavirus Act 2020, arrangements for completion of MCCDs and Certificates of Still-Birth were put in place, including the electronic issue of these to the General Register Office (GRO).

The Coronavirus Act was originally intended to provide a temporary change to the process for completion and issue of MCCDs and Still-Birth Certificates as required by the pandemic. As those processes and procedures are working effectively, they have now been placed on a permanent legal footing through the introduction of the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (Northern Ireland) 2026.

The method of signing MCCDs and Still-Birth Certificates has now been defined in legislation by the Deaths and Still-Births (Signing of Certificates) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026. In summary, these Regulations allow:

- a) A Medical Certificate of Cause of Death to be signed by a registered medical practitioner, either in ink or by the approved electronic means; and
- b) A Certificate of Still-Birth may be signed by a registered medical practitioner or a registered midwife, either in ink or by the approved electronic means.

## Approved Electronic Means of Signature

An MCCD which has been completed electronically should ensure that **the printed name of the certifying doctor is present alongside a matching and correct GMC number**. In practice, this will mean no change to how MCCDs should be completed currently. It is also permissible to include a digital signature (if your computer's software supports this).

Once completed, the electronic document must be forwarded to the GRO by email from a known email account. For hospital deaths this must be from an **HSC email address** while for community deaths this should be from an email address **habitually used by the medical practice concerned**. MCCDs must not be forwarded to the GRO from personal email addresses.

**Note that:** *GRO staff may reject any submitted document which does not contain the correct printed name of the certifying doctor and/or has not been received from an appropriate source.*

## New Address for Forwarding of MCCDs to GRO

From 23 March 2026, MCCDs and Certificates of Still-Birth should be forwarded to: [GRO-MedicalCertificates@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:GRO-MedicalCertificates@finance-ni.gov.uk)

I have included below some key reminders relating to death certification:

### Who can complete the MCCD?

- Doctors certifying deaths do so as a *statutory* duty under the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 Section 25(2).
- MCCDs should only be completed by a registered medical practitioner who has seen and treated the deceased within the last 28 days and the death is as a result of a natural illness.

## Issuing of the MCCD

- MCCDs should continue to be completed electronically using either NIECR for hospital deaths or via GP systems for community deaths. In cases where electronic systems are not available it is permissible to use handwritten MCCD forms which should then be scanned.
- Once completed, **all MCCDs MUST be e-mailed** to the GRO at: [GRO-MedicalCertificates@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:GRO-MedicalCertificates@finance-ni.gov.uk)
- The e-mail **should contain the contact details for the next of kin** and, if known, the name of the Funeral Director appointed by the family. This will allow for the certificate to be issued directly to the Funeral Director to enable disposal of the body to proceed.
- If the family are in attendance and request a copy of the MCCD this should be provided. However, a copy of the MCCD **MUST still be completed electronically and e-mailed** directly to the GRO as directed.

## Stillbirth

- The process for the completion of a Still-Birth certificate remains the same, the completed certificate **MUST be scanned and e-mailed** directly to the GRO at: [GRO-MedicalCertificates@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:GRO-MedicalCertificates@finance-ni.gov.uk)
- The e-mail should contain the contact details for the next of kin (usually the mother) and if known, the Funeral Director appointed by the family.
- If a copy of the Still-Birth certificate is requested by the parent(s), this should be provided; however, a copy of the Still-Birth Certificate **MUST still be scanned and e-mailed** directly to the GRO as directed.

## Independent Medical Examiner Service Prototype

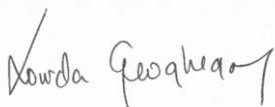
- For deaths in hospital, medical practitioners are reminded that the Independent Medical Examiner Prototype Service is in operation. If the death is certified between 8.00am – 4.00pm (Monday – Friday), the certifying doctor should complete the MCCD on NIECR and **immediately contact the IME Prototype Service** to enable the review to be carried out in a timely manner **before the MCCD** is emailed to the GRO.

For further guidance please refer to the 'Guidance surrounding Death' section of the Department of Health website where there is a page on Death Certification and Completing an MCCD.

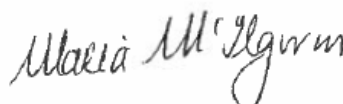
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/guidance-surrounding-death>

We would ask that this information is cascaded to all relevant staff as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely



**PP – Professor Lourda Geoghegan**  
**Deputy Chief Medical Officer**  
**Professor Sir Michael McBride**  
**Chief Medical Officer**



**Professor Maria McIlgorm**  
**Chief Nursing Officer**

## Circulation List

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Director of Social Care and Children, SPPG  
Family Practitioner Service Leads, SPPG (*for cascade to GP Out of Hours services*)  
Medical Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Consultants, Occupational Health Physicians and School Medical Leads*)  
Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Community Nurses, and Midwives*)  
Directors of Children's Services, HSC Trusts  
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This letter is available on the Department of Health website at

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>