

CERTIFICATION OF DEATH (SCOTLAND) ACT 2011

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUMMARY OF THE ACT

3. The Act introduces a new system of scrutiny of medical certificates of cause of death. It creates the post of medical reviewer and senior medical reviewer whose functions are to review for accuracy the certificates referred to them from a variety of sources. A number of certificates will be referred at random by district registrars. The Registrar General will be responsible for ensuring that certificates are referred according to the chosen selection scheme. Persons with some connection to the deceased can apply for a review and certificates may also be selected by the medical reviewers themselves for scrutiny.
4. Medical reviewers will be involved in the training of doctors in the completion of medical certificates of cause of death and information derived from reviews will directly feed into that training.
5. The Act provides for the form of medical certificates of cause of death to be amended to show additional relevant medical information to indicate, for example, whether it is safe to dispose of the body by cremation. The Act also provides for the form of still-birth certificates to be amended to show additional relevant medical information, to indicate whether the body presents a risk to public health.
6. Where a person has died outwith Scotland and the body is to be cremated in Scotland, medical reviewers will determine whether it is safe to cremate the body. They may also assist persons to make arrangements for a post-mortem examination (including meeting the cost of the examination) in such cases from outwith the UK if no cause of death is available. Medical reviewers' assistants will verify foreign death certificates and give authorisation for disposal.
7. A fee may be charged to pay for the review system and in cases where authority to cremate a body from outwith the UK is required.
8. It will be an offence to dispose of a body or body parts without authorisation.