

Update note for HWTC meeting 23rd January 2024 – Sunday burial provision.

Provision of a 7-day burial service is dependent on other key services provided by the NHS and Council being available 7 days a week to release statutory paperwork and the body of the deceased including:

- registrars and coroners services (Buckinghamshire Council)
- mortuary services (NHS),
- medical examination services (NHS)

Further to the written update provided prior the HWTC meeting on the 14th March 2023 no progress had been made with the implementation of the Medical Examiner Scheme (NHS) until the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) published Draft Regulations on 14th December 2023.

A plain language document, explaining the Government's death certification reforms, can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/death-certification-reform-and-the-introduction-of-medical-examiners> - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

The draft regulations and plain language document will help medical practitioners, registrars, coroners and the public understand how the new legal requirements will work and will help ensure frontline services are ready. Comments on DHSC's draft regulations can be sent directly to DHSC.

The reforms will come into force from April 2024 and will put the medical examiner system's obligations, duties and responsibilities on a statutory footing and ensure they are recognised by law. Once the death certification reforms come into force, **all deaths** in England and Wales will be independently reviewed, **without exception**, either by a medical examiner or a coroner.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) are working, separately, to amend the guidance provided to cemetery and crematoria providers and will continue to work closely with burial, cremation and funeral sector stakeholders in the run up to April 2024 and will be providing further updates in due course.

The Royal College of Pathologists will be holding an information event on 17 January 2024. Details are available online at: <https://rcpath.org>. Officers from the Cemeteries Service will be attending this information event to gain an understanding of the implementation, and impacts, of the scheme.

Given these developments it was felt appropriate to delay inviting the Medical Examiner to attend until the key services involved in the death certification and burial process had been given the opportunity to evaluate the impacts and requirements of the Draft Regulations.