



Training portfolio for the Medical Examiner Officer certificate of competence

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Introduction

Medical examiner officers (MEOs) are an integral part of running an effective and efficient medical examiner (ME) service that keeps the bereaved at its centre.

Their role is to assist the ME, under delegated authority, with aspects of scrutiny to ensure that a correct medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) is issued to the family while identifying and passing on any areas of concern with aspects of an individual's care.

MEOs can assist, under delegated authority, with two aspects of the scrutiny process: discussion with the attending doctor and discussion with the bereaved. MEOs cannot perform the scrutiny of the medical records, but can review the notes in preparation for these discussions. The ME may delegate some or all of these discussions to the MEO, but MEOs do not work in isolation from the ME, and cannot make final decisions about a case or concerns raised.

To conduct these tasks, MEOs must have a clear understanding of the context of the case, and be able to understand the medical records, disease process and medical or procedural terminology. MEOs must also be able to explain the ME and qualified attending practitioner's (QAP's) rationale and thoughts surrounding the cause of death, as well as decisions made in relation to patients' illnesses, to both medical staff and the bereaved.

MEOs must have an understanding of the role of the coroner's office, bereavement office, mortuary, registration services, funeral directors and crematoria staff to ensure that they work together and provide a system that works seamlessly for the bereaved.

Completion of the training portfolio allows MEOs to provide a first-class ME service to the bereaved. That service depends upon MEOs being able to apply underpinning knowledge to the process of death certification as a whole. Therefore, MEOs, regardless of their background, should be aware of the bigger picture and how the service is pivotal to the care of the bereaved, and to the protection of future patients.

Responsibilities lie with the MEO to ensure they only work within the limits of their practice and with the lead MEO and ME to ensure that they are satisfied that the standard of proficiency has been met.

Individuals undertaking the role of MEO must acknowledge that their training is continuous. This training and assessment will be carried out through a structured training programme, but MEOs must also seek opportunities to add to this training via CPD and self-directed learning.

Medical examiner officer details form

| | |
|---|--|
| Registration Training Portfolio Case No. | |
| Surname | |
| First name | |
| Email address | |
| Date of e-learning completion | |
| Date of MEO face-to-face training | |
| Date started in post | |
| RCPATH Membership Number (if applicable) | |

| |
|--|
| Applicant declaration |
| <p>I confirm that the evidence provided is my own work. It demonstrates my professional competence, and that I meet the standards of practice for working as a medical examiner officer.</p> <p>Signature: _____ Date: _____</p> |

| |
|--|
| Lead MEO declaration |
| <p>I declare that I can confirm that the named applicant fulfils the standards to work as a medical examiner officer.</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Signature: _____ Date: _____</p> |

Section 1: Professional conduct

Module 1: Personal responsibility and learning

As a medical examiner officer you must be able to identify and act within your scope of practice, take responsibility for completing tasks and procedures, and use your judgement for when to seek advice from others. You should behave in a professional manner and be aware of how your behaviour can impact on others. Continued learning is vital for the role and you should be able to identify learning and reflect on this and other learning opportunities to inform self-development.

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|--|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Undertake delegated tasks exercising their own professional judgement | | | |
| Practice safely and effectively within their scope of practice and within legal and ethical boundaries | | | |
| Know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional | | | |
| Recognise situations where personal independence is compromised and act accordingly | | | |
| Recognise the need to effectively manage their own workload and resources and the implications of this on the bereaved | | | |
| Understand the importance of acting in the best interests of service users at all times | | | |
| Understand what is required of them by the medical examiner and users of the service | | | |
| Recognise that relationships with service users should be based on trust and how to promote this | | | |
| Be aware of pathways for raising concerns and be able to act intuitively and justify their actions | | | |
| Understand the importance of maintaining their own health and how to seek help if needed | | | |
| Understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up to date and the importance of CPD | | | |

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|--|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Recognise that they are personally responsible for the work they undertake | | | |
| Understand the importance of participation and delivering training | | | |
| Understand the value of reflective practice and how to apply any learning | | | |

Module 2: Equality and diversity

As a medical examiner officer you must work within the Equality Act 2010 and must not discriminate against service users or colleagues by allowing your personal views to affect your work, care or service you provide. Although you may not be in a position to change practice, you must challenge colleagues or escalate concerns to your line manager if you think there has been behaviour that goes against these standards

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Understand the need to respect and uphold the dignity, values and opinion of service users and demonstrate a professional level of care | | | |
| Be aware of the impact of religion and culture on your practice | | | |
| Understand the requirements to adapt practice to meet the needs of different groups and individuals | | | |
| Practice in a non-discriminatory manner | | | |
| Be aware of the Equality Act 2010 and how it protects people from discrimination in relation to protected characteristics | | | |
| Take steps to identify any barriers for the bereaved and find ways to overcome these | | | |

Module 3: Communication with service users

As a medical examiner officer you must be able to demonstrate effective written and verbal communication with colleagues and service users. You are expected to apply various communication methods and approaches, appropriate to others and the situation, in order to facilitate positive outcomes. You are expected to be able to communicate effectively on difficult, complex and sensitive issues and demonstrate the ability to overcome barriers to communication.

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Understand how communication skills can affect engagement with service users and how to make effective use of different means of communication | | | |
| Be aware of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by factors such as culture, religion and age | | | |
| Understand the need to provide service users or people acting on their behalf with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions | | | |
| Identify situations in which communication must be adapted to meet the needs of the service user, such as through the use of face-to-face meetings or an interpreter | | | |
| Recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage engagement with the service through direct and indirect communication | | | |
| Demonstrate effective and appropriate verbal and non-verbal skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to service users, colleagues and others | | | |
| Communicate the thoughts and rationale of the medical examiner and the attending team in relation to death certification and explain complex medical terms in a non-medical way | | | |
| Be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users and others | | | |

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Be able to demonstrate empathy and compassion during communication while maintaining a professional distance | | | |
| Be able to modify means of communication to address and take account of factors such as age, capacity and language barriers | | | |
| Demonstrate effective listening skills | | | |

Module 4: Patient records, confidentiality and information governance

As a medical examiner officer you must act within the bounds of patient confidentiality and ensure all statutory or legal documentation is completed correctly.

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|--|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Treat all information confidentially in accordance with current legislation | | | |
| Only discuss or disclose information about people who use the medical examiner service in accordance with legislation and agreed ways of working | | | |
| Always seek guidance from a senior member of staff regarding any issues with disclosure of information | | | |
| Be aware of the limits of the concept of confidentiality relating to death certification and registration | | | |
| Understand the principles of information governance and be aware of the safe and effective use of health and social care information | | | |
| Be able to recognise and respond appropriately to situations where it is necessary to share information to safeguard service users or the wider public | | | |
| Demonstrate accurate and effective record keeping throughout the scrutiny of individual cases | | | |
| Be aware of how the service can detect patterns and trends and how to pass on this information | | | |
| Be aware of clinical governance and other mortality review programmes in place | | | |
| Collect responses and information that helps to evaluate the responses of service users to their care from the medical examiner service | | | |

Module 5: Professional relationships

As a medical examiner officer you must have the ability to work effectively with others and develop productive working relationships while recognising and valuing the contributions of other team members.

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|--|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Develop and maintain professional relationships at individual and team levels | | | |
| Understand the need to engage service users to evaluate the care received | | | |
| Be aware of the impact of the medical examiner service on the bereaved and the care provider | | | |
| Recognise the role of other professions in health and social care | | | |
| Understand the structure and function of health and social care services in England and/or Wales | | | |
| Effectively and efficiently contribute to work undertaken at individual and team levels | | | |

Section 2: Professional practice

Module 1: Development of the medical examiner service

To undertake the role of the medical examiner officer, you must have an understanding of events that initiated and promoted the death certification reforms and the development of the medical examiner service. You must be able to apply this knowledge to improve the current process of death certification and mortality review and explain the changes and benefits to service users.

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Be aware of legislation relating to death certification and coroner law | | | |
| Have an understanding of the events that brought about the introduction of the medical examiner service | | | |
| Be aware of the examples of systemic harm caused to patients, e.g. at Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust, Southern Health, Winterbourne View, Stepping Hill Hospital and Gosport | | | |
| Understand the limits of the role of the medical examiner service and that it is not an investigative role | | | |
| Be aware of the LeDeR programme and how the medical examiner service links with this | | | |
| Understand the role of the medical examiner and the responsibility they have | | | |
| Be aware of the line management structure of the lead medical examiner / medical examiner officer and the national medical examiner | | | |
| Understand how the development of the medical examiner service addresses issues with the current system of death certification | | | |
| Understand how the medical examiner system strengthens the current death certification system | | | |
| Know about the current legislation of duty of candour and how this impacts on the role | | | |

Module 2: Medical examiner process

In order to assist the medical examiner with scrutiny, medical examiner officers must have an understanding of the end-to-end process for death certification and the medical examiner service. You will need to be able to assist the medical examiner, under delegated authority, with two aspects of scrutiny and understand the work required by the whole medical examiner team in order for the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) to be issued and the death registered.

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Understand the legal aspects of death certification, including who can complete an MCCD, when an MCCD can be completed and the types of death that can be certified | | | |
| Understand the end-to-end process map of the medical examiner system and how several medical examiners may be involved in a single case | | | |
| Understand how other equally important groups assist in a functioning medical examiner service and how the service interacts with each department | | | |
| Understand the legal aspect of cremation forms and who may complete them | | | |
| Be able to construct a cause of death with appropriate wording and sequence | | | |
| Understand how to complete all components of the MCCD and the importance of accuracy | | | |
| Ensure that the timeliness of the medical examiner process does not cause undue distress or delay to the bereaved | | | |
| Understand the role of the bereavement office and the importance of close working relationships | | | |
| Understand the key components of the medical examiner process and who can undertake the documented tasks and at which part in the process | | | |
| Ensure the medical examiner service maintains independence and understand how this is achieved and may be perceived | | | |

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Understand the importance of interacting with the attending practitioner and the bereaved | | | |
| Be aware of and competent in the use of any database and hard copy or electronic forms in use for the medical examiner service (e.g. ME1A, ME1B, ME2) | | | |

Module 3: Coroner cases

The medical examiner service has close links with the coroner's service as cases will pass between the two offices. As a medical examiner officer, you must be able to give accurate advice and guidance, and work together with the coroner's officers in cases that require both the medical examiner and coroner input.

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|--|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Understand the role of the coroner and the coroner's officers | | | |
| Understand the statutory duty to report to a coroner | | | |
| Understand the outcomes of a referral: 100A, Form B and inquest | | | |
| Understand the difference between the medical examiner and coroner's service | | | |
| Promote interactions for shared cases between the coroner's and medical examiner service and have clear understanding of the roles undertaken by each office | | | |
| Understand the purpose of an inquest | | | |
| Be able to give accurate advice to clinical teams and the bereaved about the requirements to report to a coroner | | | |
| Identify cases that require immediate referral to a coroner | | | |
| Be able to explain changes in the guidance for reporting deaths (local rules) | | | |
| Refer cases to the coroner under delegated authority from the medical examiner | | | |
| Act as a coordinator for following up cases reported to the coroner | | | |

Module 4: Registration services

The medical examiner service must assist in facilitating completion of a MCCD that may be registered by the bereaved. You must understand the legal obligations registrars face, and the process of registering a death in order to prevent the medical examiner service causing inadvertent delays or complications at the point of registration.

| Knowledge | Aware of | Understands | Competent to practice |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Medical examiner officers must: | | | |
| Understand the role of the registrar and the statutory duty to report to the coroner | | | |
| Understand the definition of an informant, and who may register the death | | | |
| Understand the process of death registration within the area the death has occurred | | | |
| Understand the importance of the death certification and the disposal order | | | |
| Understand the requirement to register the death within a prescribed period | | | |
| Understand how registration differs for inquest cases | | | |
| Be aware of who to direct the bereaved to if they have questions regarding registration | | | |
| Be aware of the requirements in completing an MCCD where a consent post mortem is to be undertaken and the implications this may have | | | |

Induction programme

The role of the MEO is a new one, so no individual is likely to have all the knowledge and experience required when they first start working in the role. Individual ME services will want to develop their own local induction programme for new MEOs, but may wish to use the following as a guide.

Understanding the role of the ME service

- Review of national system
- Review of office SOPs and establishing a working process
- Start small – do a few cases with the ME
- Case discussion with MEs – discuss issues, questions and outcomes
- Discussion with families about care
- Expand the ME service to include all three aspects of scrutiny
- Contact families to discuss cause of death and review any concerns

Understanding the role of the coroner

- Visit to the coroner's office
- Understanding the role of the coroner's officer
- Understanding the role of the coroner
- Understanding inquest process
- Attend an inquest

Understanding the role of bereavement and mortuary services

- Visit to the bereavement service office
- Visit to the mortuary
- Visit to the Registrar
- Understanding the MCCD
- Understanding the referral to the coroner process
- Shadowing a bereavement service officer, including interaction with the family
- Understanding the mortuary – rules and regulations of storage and post mortem
- Review of statutory duty to report to the coroner and guidance for registration

Understanding the role of the funeral director, faith groups and organ donation

- Visit to areas linked with disposal of a body
- Understanding issues relating to organ donation
- Visit to a funeral directors to understand the impact the ME service may have on current practice
- Visit to a crematorium to understand the process of cremation forms and regulations
- Meet with faith leaders and/or chaplaincy services to understand the requirements of faith groups
- Visit ITU and meet with doctors and Specialist Nurses for Organ Donation (SNODs) to understand the donation process

Understanding the role of clinical teams – visits to clinical areas

- Ortho-geriatric ward round – understanding conditions and surgical interventions
- Respiratory ward round – understanding conditions and medical interventions
- Palliative care – end of life care
- Shadow a nurse in the Acute Admissions or Accident and Emergency department
- Other specialist areas, e.g. paediatrics, cardiothoracic surgery