

## **Verification (confirmation) of Death Guidance**

**Issue date : 22 April 2020    Review date March 2023**

1. Verification of Death is a check that is performed when someone has died to confirm that they are actually dead.
2. In English law there is no requirement to verify a death.
3. Verification of death can be carried out by anyone who feels competent to do this, or who has been deemed competent to do so. This can be a family member or carer. This does not have to be a doctor, nurse, or paramedic.
4. How to verify death
  - a. If a person appears dead, then those present should consider whether resuscitation is appropriate. Does the patient have a ReSPECT form or Do Not Attempt CPR (DNA-CPR) which records their wishes?
  - b. If resuscitation is appropriate then this should be commenced and assistance sought.
  - c. If resuscitation is not appropriate, and none of the circumstances in point 6 below apply, then a family member or carer can verify death if they wish.
  - d. The relative or carer should check the person's pulse in the neck and breathing.
  - e. If there is no pulse and no effort to breath for more than one minute, the patient can be presumed to have died.
  - f. If the relative or carer is uncertain, then they can recheck after a few minutes
  - g. If the relative or carer does not feel confident doing this, it does not matter, as verification of death is not a legal requirement.
  - h. Whether verification has been carried out or not, the relative or carer should inform those who have been providing care to the person that they have died. This may include community nurses, Marie Curie, St Barnabas, and the GP practice.
5. The only legal requirement is for Registered Medical Practitioner, a GP or hospital doctor, to complete a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)
6. When a person dies a doctor can complete the MCCD as long as the death is of "natural causes", there are no suspicious circumstances, and the death did not directly result from; trauma, surgery, violence, medications, drugs, self-harm, neglect, or exposure to a toxic substance.
7. If the death did occur due to any of these things, or the cause of death is not known, then the doctor is required to inform the Coroner about the circumstances of the death, so that the Coroner can investigate this.
8. Some organisations recommend Verification of Death. This can be performed by any person who feels competent to do it, and does not require medical or nursing training.
9. Undertakers can move the deceased person to a funeral parlour without verification, as long as none of the circumstances in point 6 above apply.
10. Remember to note the time of death and if employed to provide care please ensure this time and the event is recorded in the care records.
11. If relatives or carers are not comfortable verifying death, they can be informed that this is not a necessary step, and that they can ask an undertaker to move the deceased when they are ready. However, in some circumstances the clinician may choose to verify death to provide reassurance to families, and offer support and pastoral care.