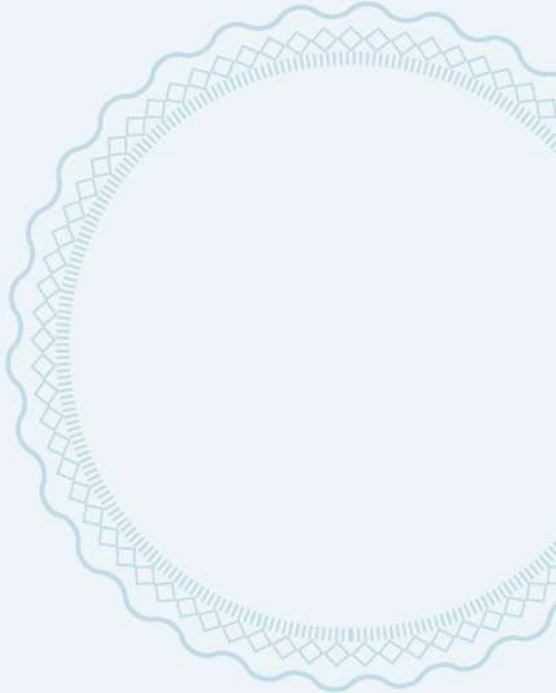


How to provide feedback or make a complaint about the Death Certification Review Service

May 2026



Introduction

The Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 introduced a number of changes to the death registration system, including the introduction of the Death Certification Review Service ('the service').

The service has a team of experienced and trained doctors who are responsible for reviewing randomly selected Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCD). The aims of the service are to improve:

- the quality and accuracy of MCCDs
- public health information about causes of death in Scotland, and
- clinical governance issues identified during the death certification review process

What is this booklet about?

This booklet explains how to provide feedback, make comments, and raise concerns or complaints about the service.

What is the difference between feedback, comments, concerns or complaints?

Feedback or comments are an expression of someone's view or experience of using the service which may lead to improvement.

A concern is an expression which requires an immediate explanation, reassurance or action.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction. It may relate to the standard of services that have been provided or to actions that have been taken. It may also relate to a failure to take action.

Who can complain?

Anyone who is dissatisfied with the standard of service provided by the Death Certification Review Service, or its actions or lack of actions, can complain.

You can complain directly, or if you would rather have someone make the complaint on your behalf, we can deal with your representative. This could be a relative, a carer, a friend or any other person that you choose.

You can complain for someone else if you:

- have their agreement to complain, or
- are allowed by law to act for them

How to provide feedback, make comments, raise concerns or complaints

The service is committed to listening, understanding and taking action to make improvements. You can complain in person where the issue or concern you wish to complain about occurred. Wherever possible we encourage you to speak with a member of staff. It is easier to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the person concerned. They will always try to resolve any problems on the spot if it is possible to do so.

You can also complain by:

- telephoning 0300 123 1898, 8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday
- emailing his.dcrscomplaints@nhs.scot
- writing to the service Programme Manager at:

DCRS Programme Manager
Healthcare Improvement Scotland
Death Certification Review Service
Delta House
West Nile Street
Glasgow
G1 2NP

When complaining, please tell us:

- your full name and address, and your email address if this is your preferred method of contact
- the full name, address and date of birth of the person affected if you are complaining on behalf of somebody else
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- when this happened
- where this happened, and
- how you want us to resolve the matter

Giving us this information will help us to clearly identify the problem and what we need to do to resolve matters.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of becoming aware of the issue or within 12 months of the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. In these circumstances, you must give good reasons as to why the timescale should be extended. If we are unable to agree to extend the timescales we will provide you with a clear explanation of the reason.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- an inadequate standard of service
- difficulty in communicating with the organisation
- treatment by or attitude of a member of our staff
- operational and procedural issues
- our failure to follow the appropriate process, and
- your dissatisfaction with our policy

We realise that it is not possible to list everything that you can complain about. If you want to complain about something that we have not listed above, we encourage you to do so.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things we cannot deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- complaints about NHS boards and primary care services provided under an NHS contract
- complaints about the Scottish Government
- matters relating to independent healthcare services which are not regulated by Healthcare Improvement Scotland
- complaints about the judgements made and conclusions reached in Healthcare Improvement Scotland standards, reports, inspections or reviews
- a previously concluded complaint or a request to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- allegations that have been referred to another statutory agency, such as the police or social work, or a complaint made by an employee of an NHS body or other person in relation to their employment contract

- a complaint that is being or has been investigated by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)
- a complaint arising from a suggested failure to comply with a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act, and
- a complaint about which you have commenced legal proceedings or have clearly stated that you intend to do so, rather than pursue the matter using the NHS complaints procedure

We also realise it is not possible to list everything you cannot complain about. If other procedures can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

What can I expect from the Death Certification Review Service?

We will be polite and do our best to help you try to sort out your complaint in a way that you are happy with. We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage one – early, local resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. Where appropriate, this could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

Sometimes we will have to make some enquiries before we can respond to your complaint. We will give you our decision at Stage one in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we cannot resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage two. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

Stage two – investigation

Stage two deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage one and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. When using Stage two we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days

If we need to investigate your complaint, we will tell you what we have found by writing to you within 20 working days. If we cannot provide you with a full response

within 20 working days, we will tell you why and give you a timescale of when we will contact you.

If your complaint involves multiple organisations, we will:

- inform you who will take the lead in dealing with the complaint
- issue a joint response, where possible

The service will collect, record and disseminate information, themes and good practice gained from views and experiences to ensure they are used to improve service quality. This information will be shared with staff, where appropriate, and staff feedback and suggestions will be sought for further improvement.

Who can help me with my complaint?

We will be happy to give you advice. We can also give you details of organisations that give advice and support to people who want to complain. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau may also be able to give you help and support. You can find your nearest bureau on the website www.cas.org.uk, or in the phone book. You may also wish to contact Patient Advice Service Scotland (PASS) directly through the website (www.patientadvicescotland.org.uk).

Sometimes we may offer to arrange mediation for you. This means that an independent third party, such as the [Scottish Mediation Network](#) helps you and the service to discuss the problem and agree on how to sort it.

What can I do if I remain dissatisfied with the response I receive from the Death Certification Review Service?

If you are not satisfied with our response, or the way we have dealt with your complaint, you can speak to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). SPSO provides an independent and free service to help people who are still having problems after they have made a complaint about a public service. SPSO cannot help you make a complaint. However they can help if you are:

- finding it difficult to get an answer to your complaint, or
- unhappy with the results of a complaint you have made

SPSO contact details are:

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Freepost EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 0BR
Tel no: 0800 377 7330
Online at: www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form

How to find out more

For more information please contact:

DCRS Programme Manager
Healthcare Improvement Scotland
Death Certification Review Service
Delta House
West Nile Street
Glasgow
G1 2NP

Email: his.dcrscomplaints@nhs.scot

Telephone: 0300 123 1898

Website: www.healthcareimprovementscotland.scot/inspections-reviews-and-regulation/death-certification-review-service-dcrs/