

## Consultant Job Description

**Grade:** Consultant, Medical Examiner.

**Department:** Medical Examiner's Office

**Reports to:** Medical Director.

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### Job Summary:

#### Context

This post has been created by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in response to observations made in the Third Report of the Shipman Inquiry. The introduction of the medical examiner system will promote robust, transparent, and independent scrutiny of death certification processes.

#### Dimensions of role

Medical examiners (MEs) are appropriately trained doctors who will verify clinical information on Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCDs) and ensure that the right referrals are made to the coroner for further investigation. A practising medical practitioner who has been on the general medical council register for a minimum of five years post registration can apply to be a medical examiner. It is recommended that medical examiners are consultant grade doctors from a range of disciplines (including GPs).

MEs will take a consistent approach to the formulation of MCCD content, which must be clinically accurate and reflect any discussions with the next of kin/informant. MEs must not have been involved in the care of the deceased patients for deaths they scrutinise.

Salary, hours, and other conditions of service will be agreed between the ME and the employer.

#### Independence

MEs must avoid any potential conflicts of interest. In cases where they have a personal or professional relationship with the deceased person, next of kin/informant, or with the attending doctor preparing the MCCD, they must transfer any scrutiny of the death to another ME.

#### Accountability

MEs will have professional independence in scrutinising deaths but will be accountable to the employing organisation's Board for achieving agreed standards or levels of performance.

MEs will have an independent professional line of accountability to a regional structure of NHS Improvement/NHS England outside the employing organisation and immediate line management structure.

MEs will comply with guidance issued by the National Medical Examiner when carrying out ME duties.

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## **Key Responsibilities:**

### Main duties

- To ensure compliance with the legal and procedural requirements associated with the current and proposed reformed processes of certification, investigation by coroners and registration of deaths.
- To scrutinise the certified causes of death offered by attending doctors in a way that is proportionate, consistent, and compliant with the proposed national protocol.
- To discuss and explain the cause of death with next of kin/informants in a transparent, tactful, and sympathetic manner. It is anticipated that such discussions will be predominately conducted through telephone conversations where barriers to understanding information may exist.
- To ensure that all users of the ME system are treated with respect and are not discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability.
- To maintain comprehensive records of all deaths scrutinised and undertake analysis to provide information to the National Medical Examiner's office.
- To participate in relevant clinical governance activities relating to death certification including audits, mortality review processes and investigations regarding formal complaints about patient care.
- To support the training of junior doctors in their understanding of death certification and promote good practice in accurate completion of MCCDs.
- To work with medical examiner officers (MEOs), delegating duties as appropriate.
- To engage with lead ME and lead MEO for the region.
- To adopt a collaborative working relationship with other MEs by sharing experiences and expertise to support peer learning and set uniform standards of service delivery.
- The timetabling of the duties will be discussed after appointment with the successful candidate, the Lead Medical Examiner, and their CD to reflect in their job plan.
- support those doctors who call for medical advice on suspected natural causes of death before they prepare an MCCD and provide general medical advice to the coroner.
- work with the any other local medical examiner(s) in LA/LHB or elsewhere to arrange reciprocal cover for holidays and other periods of absence and also to ensure that there is no potential conflict of interest between the medical examiner and the death being scrutinised.

### Continuing professional development

- MEs are expected to take responsibility for their own continuing professional development in accordance with any standards for maintaining a GMC licence to practice and membership of any relevant professional body. The ME role should be included in the whole practice appraisal.
  - MEs should maintain a Personal Development Plan in agreement with their appraiser.
  - There will be opportunities to attend local and national activities to maintain up to date knowledge.
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## Person Specification

### Qualifications

- Full GMC registration with a licence to practice
- As a pre-condition of practicing, an ME must have successfully completed the mandatory components of the national online medical examiner curriculum. Face-to-face training must be completed within the first six months of being in post.
- Proactive and self-motivated with a flexible working approach.
- Have the resilience to manage own reaction to frequently distressing situations and support others within the team.
- To sustain professional integrity and independence at all times, particularly where there is the potential for a conflict of interest.

### Clinical Experience

- Must have at least 5 years post-Registration medical experience.

### Clinical Skills

#### Behavioural attributes

MEs should be aware of how their personal communication style impacts on others and be able to adapt their approach to suit a variety of situations and audiences. This will require:

- Highly evolved self-awareness and empathetic skills to liaise effectively and sympathetically with bereaved families
- The ability to demonstrate and combine appropriate levels of compassion with professionalism and discretion
- Being open to constructive criticism, ideas, and solutions
- Acting as a positive role model and interacting appropriately with all stakeholders including MEOs, other MEs, the bereaved and the coroner
- Having the integrity to gain trust and comply with the independent nature of the ME role in the context of other clinical specialty duties.

#### Communications and key working relationships

To be a source of expert knowledge and advice for health professionals and wider stakeholder groups; these include:  
Internal within own organisation:

- Medical Director
- All grades of clinicians
- Clinical governance leads
- MEOs and bereavement service staff
- Mortuary staff.

External:

- Coroners and their officers
- Registrar of births and deaths
- Local Authorities, including care homes and safeguarding teams
- Spiritual and faith community leaders
- Other health care providers to including GPs

- Lead MEs and lead MEOs
- National Medical Examiner.

### Safety and Quality – Clinical Governance

MEs will be required to participate in any relevant governance activities relating to scrutiny and confirmation of the cause of death where concerns have been raised by the next of kin/informant of the deceased and/or clinical staff and ME scrutiny.

MEs will facilitate routine analysis of MCCD information to identify trends, patterns and unusual features of deaths and report, as required, firstly to the regional Lead ME and ultimately to the National Medical Examiner's office. MEs will provide information to local Child Death Overview panels in respect of all child deaths which are not being investigated by the coroner.

You will be required to participate in any relevant governance activities relating to the scrutiny and confirmation of cause of death. This will include participating in audits and investigations where appropriate and responding to complaints within the PCT's expected timescale.

You will also be expected to:

- take appropriate action where other governance issues are also identified during the scrutiny process.
- provide information, e.g., to Local Safeguarding Children Boards in respect of the deaths of all children in the LA/LHB area which are not investigated by the Coroner; and
- share relevant information with responsible officers for doctors to remedy sub-standard clinical performance to protect patients

### **Knowledge**

You must have up to date knowledge of medical conditions, treatments and medicines which may or may not have contributed to death and be able to exercise judgement in where to seek specialist advice in order to determine the appropriate level of scrutiny required.

You must be able to distinguish between natural and unnatural causes of death and to decide where a death must be reported to, and investigated by, a coroner.

MEs must have detailed knowledge of the relevant legislation and processes which apply to:

- The determination of whether a death is natural or unnatural
- Deaths that must be reported to the coroner
- Deaths abroad where bodies are returned to England and Wales for disposal
- Deaths where relatives wish to transport the body abroad for disposal
- Certifying and registering deaths and the regulations to authorise cremation or burials of stillbirths abroad.

### **Working Together For Patients with Compassion as One Team Always Improving**

**Strategic approach** (clarity on objectives, clear on expectations)

**Relationship building** (communicate effectively, be open and willing to help, courtesy, nurtures partnerships)

**Personal credibility** (visibility, approachable, back bone, courage, resilience, confidence, role model, challenge bad behaviour, manage poor performance, act with honesty and integrity)

**Passion to succeed** (patient centred, positive attitude, take action, take pride, take responsibility, aspire for excellence)

**Harness performance through teams** (champion positive change, develop staff, create a culture without fear of retribution, actively listen and value contribution, feedback and empower staff , respect diversity)

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Job holders are required to act in such a way that at all times the health and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults is safeguarded. Familiarisation with and adherence to the Safeguarding Policies of the Trust is an essential requirement for all employees. In addition, all staff are expected to complete essential/mandatory training in this area.

## Person Specification for Medical Examiner

Requirements	Essential/ Desirable	Assessment Method
<b>Knowledge, Skills, and Performance</b>		
Medical practitioner registered and licensed to practise in the UK by the GMC.	Essential	Application form
A commitment to life-long learning and undertaking personal development opportunities.	Essential	Interview
Candidates must have successfully completed the mandatory e-learning modules by the time they start the role. Candidates must attend a face-to-face training session within the first three months in post.	Essential	Application form/interview
MEs should have up-to-date knowledge of causes of death and an understanding of the legal frameworks associated with death certification processes.	Essential	Application form/Interview
IT skills including use of email and commonly used software.	Essential	Application form
Ability to manage and comply with sensitive information-based processes under tight timescales with a proportionate approach.	Essential	Interview
Knowledge of the special requirements of various faith groups and respect for equality and diversity	Essential	Application form/Interview
<b>Safety and Quality – Clinical Governance</b>		
Knowledge of local and national clinical governance systems and an understanding of how the ME can work collaboratively to improve patient safety by identifying sub-optimal clinical and organisational performance.	Essential	Application form/interview
Ability to identify available data sources to support the detection and analysis of concerns and to recognise gaps in available knowledge.	Essential	Interview
Ability to identify and disseminate examples of good practice amongst relevant colleagues.	Essential	Interview

<b>Communication and teamwork</b>		
Strong interpersonal skills demonstrating the ability to communicate in difficult and emotional situations with empathy and professionalism.	Essential	Interview
Ability to work effectively and efficiently within own team and also closely with people in other disciplines	Essential	Interview
Ability to work as part of a team and organise a fluctuating workload around competing priorities and numerous interruptions.	Essential	Interview
<b>Personal qualities and behavioural attributes</b>		
Proactive and self-motivated with a flexible working approach	Essential	Interview
Have the resilience to manage own reaction to frequently distressing situations and support others within the team.	Essential	Interview
To sustain professional integrity and independence at all times, particularly where there is the potential for a conflict of interest.	Essential	Interview

**Print Name:**

**Date:**

**Signature:**