



# Deaths Abroad

## The role of the Death Certification Review Service

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### This leaflet includes information about the following

- How the Death Certification Review Service (DCRS) supports the arrangement of a burial or cremation in Scotland if someone has died abroad. This is known as repatriation. This includes when the person was not normally resident in, or a citizen of Scotland, but has chosen to be buried or cremated in Scotland.
- The documents required to allow safe burial or cremation in Scotland when someone has died abroad.
- The process involved when someone dies abroad.

### Background

Deaths outside the UK<sup>1</sup> must be registered in the country where the person died. Before a body can be returned to Scotland, you will need to obtain:

- a death certificate or equivalent, and
- authorisation for the removal of the body from the country where the death occurred.

DCRS, which is part of Healthcare Improvement Scotland, is responsible for checking information in these cases. This is to ensure a safe burial or cremation for people who have died outside the UK and have been repatriated to Scotland.

The deceased person may not be buried or cremated until the repatriation process has been completed and authorised by DCRS.

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<sup>1</sup> Deaths in the Channel Islands and Isle of Man will need to go through the repatriation process if the body is to be buried or cremated in Scotland, as they are not part of the United Kingdom.

## The process

The person applying for authorisation to bury or cremate (often a funeral director or arranger) should make early contact with DCRS. This is so you can be guided through the process and provided with an appointment should you need documents to be certified.

The applicant must supply DCRS with:

- a completed application form
- a post mortem application (if required), and
- a completed declaration.

These forms are available from:

[www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/deathcertification](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/deathcertification)

The applicant must also supply DCRS with the following documents or properly certified copies.

- The death certificate (or equivalent) and/or Certificate of Registration of Death. These will be issued in the country where the person died.
- The passport of the person who has died (or equivalent identification).
- A completed Application for Cremation form (Form A) if the body is to be cremated.
- Any other relevant paperwork.

## Certifying the documents

These documents may be certified by certain people (listed below), who may charge a fee. Alternatively, if the originals are provided to DCRS we will generate certified copies and return the originals without charge.

- A doctor
- A bank or building society official
- A councillor
- A dentist
- A police officer
- A solicitor/advocate/justice of the peace
- A teacher or lecturer
- A veterinary surgeon
- A trade union official
- A civil servant
- A member of the clergy
- A funeral officiate



The person certifying must certify each page of the **copy** document by

- writing “Certified to be a true copy of the original seen by me” on the document
- signing the document
- dating the document
- printing their name under the signature
- stating their occupation, address and telephone number.

People who must **not** certify these documents:

- The original doctor who certified the death overseas
- The funeral director dealing with the repatriation
- A member of the deceased person’s family

The applicant should email electronic copies of these certified documents to DCRS at [dcrs@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:dcrs@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk) or [hcis.dcrs@nhs.net](mailto:hcis.dcrs@nhs.net)

Alternatively, we accept applications by post to Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Death Certification Review Service, Norseman House, 2 Ferrymuir, South Queensferry, EH30 9QZ.

We recommend that items be sent via recorded delivery.

### What happens next?

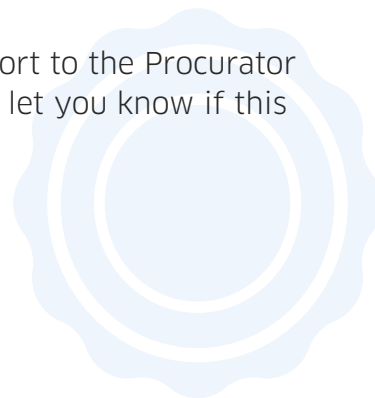
A DCRS medical reviewer (an experienced doctor) will look at the application and carry out a Level 2 review. This includes reviewing the deceased person’s primary healthcare records and speaking to the General Practitioner. These checks are undertaken to make sure the funeral can be carried out safely.

When the medical reviewer is satisfied that the paperwork is in order, they will issue the following documents which are required to proceed with funeral arrangements.

- A certificate declaring that the paperwork is in order
- A certificate authorising burial or other type of funeral
- A cremation certificate (if applicable)
- A general information letter

Usually, this process will be completed within 5 days from receipt of the application.

Under Scottish legislation, it is possible that making a report to the Procurator Fiscal service may be required. The medical reviewer will let you know if this is needed.



## What happens if insufficient information has been supplied?

If the medical reviewer needs further information, they will seek missing documents or information. They will make reasonable enquiries to allow the case to be completed as quickly as possible. Sometimes this means the medical reviewer will need to speak to the deceased person's family.

In the exceptional circumstance that the medical reviewer is unable to conclude it is safe to cremate, they will only allow a burial to take place.

## Help with Post Mortem Examinations

For some deaths that occur outside the UK where no cause of death is available, it is possible to apply to DCRS for a post mortem examination.

If it is agreed, DCRS will cover the cost of any such post mortem examination.

Any such post mortem examination is not an investigation of a "suspicious death"; rather it may provide additional information about the cause of death. Unfortunately, extra information is not guaranteed after a post mortem. The medical reviewer will be happy to discuss this with you.

An application form for assistance in arranging a post mortem examination is available at [www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/deathcertification](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/deathcertification)

## Useful links

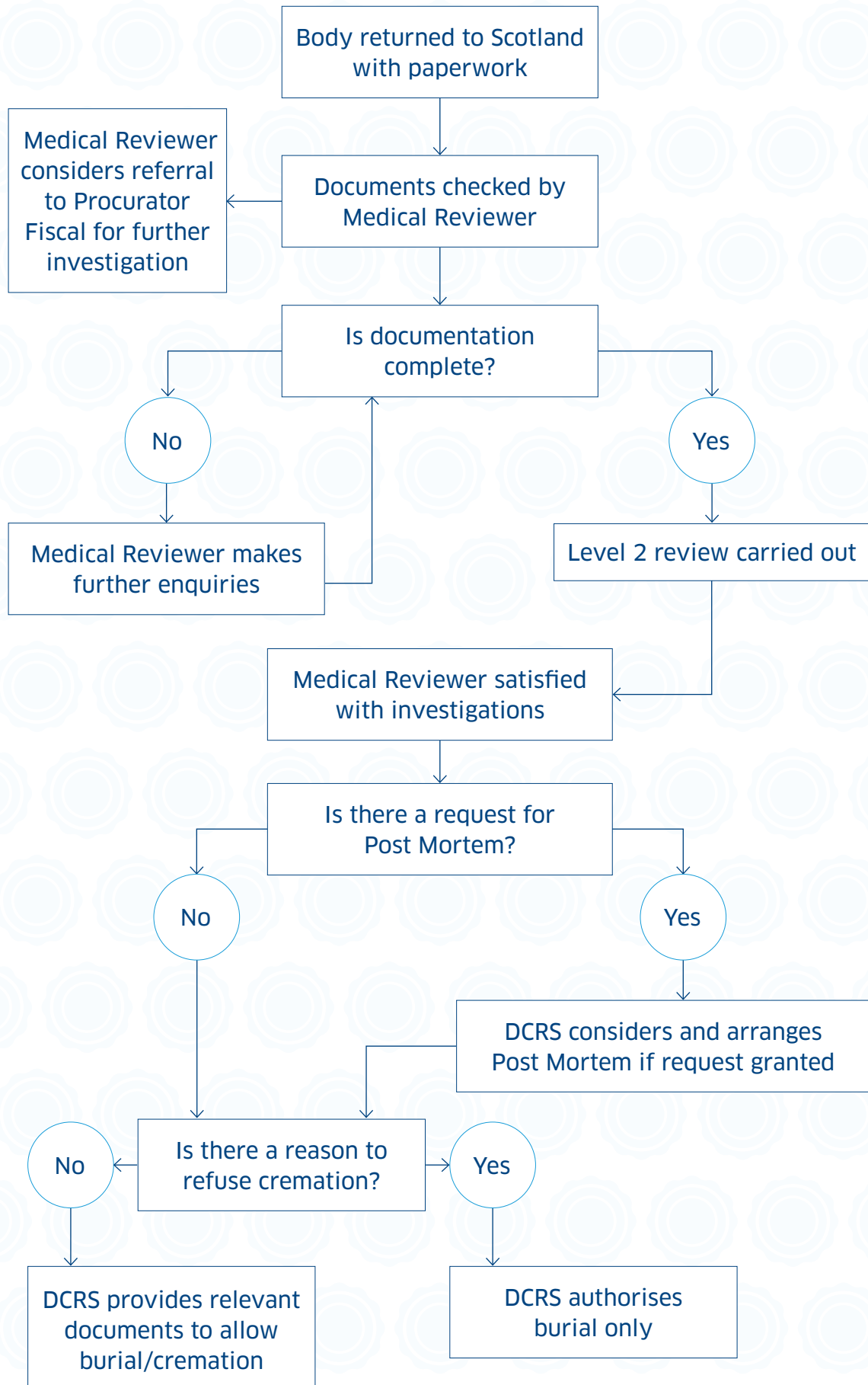
More information about what to do when somebody dies outside the UK is available from:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-death-abroad](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-death-abroad)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/death-abroad-bereavement-packs>



## Repatriation



For more information about DCRS visit our website or contact us:  
[www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/deathcertification](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/deathcertification)

email: [dcrs@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:dcrs@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk)

email: [hcis.dcrs@nhs.net](mailto:hcis.dcrs@nhs.net)

Telephone: 0300 123 1898

**Death Certification Review Service  
Healthcare Improvement Scotland**

Norseman House  
2 Ferrymuir  
South Queensferry  
EH30 9QZ

