# Flowchart to support implementation of national guidance on verification of death in this period of emergency:

#### **Hospital setting**

Deaths occurring in an acute hospital including confirmed or unconfirmed COVID-19 cases



Verification of death performed by a medical practitioner or registered nurse (who is trained to do so)



Deaths occurring in a community setting including confirmed or unconfirmed COVID-19 cases



Verification of death performed by professionals trained to do so in line with their employers' policies (e.g. medical practitioners, registered nurses or paramedics) **or** by others with remote clinical support (see box below)



### Equipment to assist verification of death:

Pen torch or mobile phone torch
Stethoscope (optional)
Watch or digital watch timer
Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) – s

Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) – see guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19



#### Process of verification in this period of emergency includes:

Check the identity of the person – e.g. photo ID, etc.

Record the full name, date of birth, address, NHS number and, ideally, next of kin details. The time of death is recorded as the time at which verification criteria are fulfilled.



#### For remote clinical support:

During core practice hours, call the person's registered general practice Outside core practice hours: call NHS 111 where a clinician will provide remote support to work through the verification process (see Annex 1)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Medical practitioners, registered nurses and paramedics, who are trained and competent to carry out verification of death, must adhere to their profession-specific guidance

## Annex 1: Guidance for remote clinical support for verification of death

This process assumes that resuscitation has already been ruled out.

During core practice hours these actions should be conducted by a clinician from the patient's practice.

Outside core practice hours the below actions should be carried out by a clinician working as part of the NHS 111/IUC CAS (this would include "out of Hours" providers) –

#### **General Considerations**

- It is important that you have enough time to carry out this procedure in a compassionate manner.
- The below steps should be recorded in your organisation's host IT system
- Be aware of any cultural or religious requirements
- Identify the person verifying and their role
- Ensure the verifier has considered privacy and dignity prior to verifying such as ensuring only essential persons are in attendance/ checking with family whether they wish for only persons of the same sex to verify the body.
- Establish the circumstances immediately prior to the death and any patient history. You, and the verifier, need to be satisfied that there is no reason to refer this death to the police or coroner.

#### **Key Questions**

- Is this an unexpected death? If yes, report to coroner
- Is there any sign of a suspicious death? If yes, report to police
- Have you established the identity of the deceased person, e.g. using photo ID?

#### The Verification Process

Ask the Verifier to complete the following checks:	Confirmed?
1. Neurological system	
<ul> <li>Check pupils are dilated and fixed (unrespon directed into both eyes using a torch)</li> </ul>	sive to light
<ul> <li>Check there is no response to painful stimuli the muscle between the neck and the should do they respond?</li> </ul>	
2. Respiratory System	
<ul> <li>Check that there is no movement of the chest by observing the chest (you may need to advaled to clothing to expose the chest/abdomen)</li> </ul>	
3. Circulatory System	

•	Advise verifier to find the site of the carotid pulse and check for	
	one minute that pulse is absent.	
Reass	sessment	
•	Wait 10 minutes and repeat the actions above.	
Recor	d that verification has been completed	
•	Record in line with your organisational policy.	
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1.	Full name, date of birth, address and NHS number (if available)	
	of person whose death is being verified	
2.	Name of person verifying	
3.	Role of person verifying	
4.	Who is present	
5.	Circumstances of death (location, who first noted it, anyone	
	present at the time of death)	
6.	Outcome of verification, including time of death	Į.
	• Record 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	<ul> <li>one minute that pulse is absent.</li> <li>Reassessment <ul> <li>Wait 10 minutes and repeat the actions above.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Record that verification has been completed <ul> <li>Record in line with your organisational policy.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Suggested items to record are: <ul> <li>Full name, date of birth, address and NHS number (if available) of person whose death is being verified</li> </ul> </li> <li>Name of person verifying</li> <li>Role of person verifying</li> <li>Who is present</li> <li>Circumstances of death (location, who first noted it, anyone present at the time of death)</li> </ul>

#### Confirmation of Identity

8. Any concerns from staff or relatives

For the purpose of confirming the identity of the deceased, it is recommended that an appropriate identity document is provided to the remote verifier e.g. via the video call or separate secure email.

#### Following Verification

Be clear about removal from the deceased or safe keeping of items such as jewellery. Inform the key person(s) of the next steps in the process and the range of options available to them.