

April 2019: Confirmation / verification of death

Please note that the BMA link:

<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/gp-practices/service-provision/confirmation-and-certification-of-death>

and the information here relates to confirmation or verification of death or pronouncing life extinct. These notes do not apply to Certification of death, which must be made by a GP.

The BMA link states: ***"If, however, the relative is content to make arrangements with an undertaker, without the doctor attending, then there is certainly no need for a duty doctor to attend."*** This doesn't state that the funeral director is able to verify death, but does give the authority to remove the deceased without the doctor's authority.

The area of verification is still vague. There is currently no expectation on the funeral director to verify death in any official capacity. If a funeral director is called to remove the body in these circumstances, it is OK to do so, unless upon arrival there is anything which gives them cause for concern. In that case the Coroner should always be informed immediately.

This is often the course of action taken before funeral directors attend and can cause great distress to the bereaved at that time, unnecessarily. So if SAIF Members can help avoid this happening by attending, making assessment and then removing if all seems well, then this has to be positive. There will be no query for the funeral director to answer if the case is latterly referred to the coroner by the GP.