# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Coming into Force of the Death Certification and Medical Examiner Reforms** |
| **DATE** | **09 September 2024** |
| **BY** | **Mark Drakeford MS, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care** |

The new statutory role of medical examiners and reforms to the death certification process come into force today.

A new system of medical examiners able scrutinise all deaths in England and Wales that are not referred to a coroner was first proposed by the Shipman Inquiry in 2003. The public inquiry into failings at the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust in February 2013 made several additional observations about the death certification process.

A non-statutory medical examiner service has been operating in Wales since 2019. But today the legislative framework for the changes come into force in England and Wales. This means all bereaved families will benefit from the additional safeguards, now being fully introduced for all deaths and the opportunities for learning that the medical examiners will provide to the NHS.

The improved accuracy of information recorded on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death will also provide improved data to assist with healthcare planning.

Medical examiners provide additional scrutiny of the medical circumstances and cause of death and ensure deaths are appropriately referred to coroners. The medical examiner service in Wales operates independently of the other NHS organisations providing care and can provide valuable independent and early feedback to health boards and NHS trusts about issues, which may be associated with care before death.

In Wales, medical examiners provide another means by which the certifying doctor can raise concerns about care, outside their own organisations. An important part of the medical examiner scrutiny are conversations with the bereaved relatives or families, which gives them an opportunity to express any concerns they may have in relation to the care and treatment of their loved one.

Medical examiner offices continue to report overwhelmingly positive feedback from bereaved people, and they, register offices and coroners now have several years’ experience of working together.

Baroness Merron, Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Department of Health and Social Care has today issued a statement on behalf of the UK Government about the reforms.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.