

Statement on registration of deaths in England and Wales

In England and Wales, deaths must normally be registered within five days. However, if the death is referred to a coroner and subject to an inquest no registration need be made until the coroner's verdict is given. This may be months or even years later.

The Royal Statistical Society is concerned that in England and Wales delayed registration of deaths poses a risk to public health by potentially undermining the evidence base for public health research, policy development and monitoring of public health initiatives, all of which rely on knowing without undue delay who died and when. In particular, in the case of novel epidemics where deaths suspected as being from the novel cause may be referred to coroners, this can leave public health authorities lacking the necessary data to track any outbreak and to intervene effectively to minimise illness or death.

The Royal Statistical Society therefore reaffirms its belief, as set out in its response to the Science and Technology Select Committee's Inquiry into Scientific Advice in Emergencies, that in England and Wales deaths referred to coroners should be registered in an appropriately timely manner as in Scotland.

Adopted by the Council of the Royal Statistical Society, 25 January 2012

