



OPERATIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SCAS Attendance at Sudden Deaths

(Adults >30 unless pre-existing condition)

Procedure No.7

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CONTENTS PAGE		
SECTION		PAGE
1.	Outline	4
2.	Purpose of Procedure	4
3.	Implications	4
4.	Consultations	4
5.	Definitions	5
6.	Police Attendance at Reported Death	5
7.	Apparent Death by Natural Causes	6
8.	DNACPR	8
9.	Death in the Workplace	9
10.	SCAS Attendance at Obvious Death	9
11.	Appendix A – Police Attendance Flow Chart	10
12.	Appendix B – How to Contact the Police	11
13.	Appendix C – SCAS Attendance at Obvious Death	12
14.	Appendix C - Undertakers	13

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1.0 Outline

The attendance and management of deaths in the community is a key role for the Police and Ambulance service and has a considerable demand for resources. Managing this demand against the needs for investigative assessment, support for the public and the need to provide information for HM Coroner is the key principle to this procedure.

2.0 Purpose of the Procedure

This procedure seeks to provide a proportionate response to deaths in the community, allowing the most appropriate resource to attend, assess and manage such incidents.

A large proportion of deaths in the community are as a result of natural causes, but may not have been expected. Generally the ambulance service attends these as a first response, pronouncing life extinct and obtaining background details from family and others present to make a clinical decision.

By providing a clear framework to identify what the Police and South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) will attend, including support around risk and intelligence assessment from the Police.

This will allow SCAS to deal with the majority of natural deaths in the community from initial attendance to reporting to the deceased's General Practitioner or the Out of Hours provider.

This in turn will allow the Police service to focus on unnatural deaths that may be suspicious or have a criminal nature.

3.0 Implications of the Policy

There are no significant implications in respect of Risk, Health and Safety, Equalities and Legal considerations. In specified circumstances it will remove the need for Police and SCAS attendance at certain types of sudden deaths. Staff must follow the Death of a Child procedure when dealing with deaths in the Under 18's

4.0 Consultation

Consultation has been undertaken externally with Thames Valley and Hants Police and other services such as the Coroner(s) and Coroner's officers within the SCAS footprint. This procedure has also been scrutinised by the relevant policy/procedure review groups.

5.0 Definitions

Deaths can be classified as the following:-

Suspicious Deaths

Those deaths where another person suspects another person has, or may be involved in the death and criminal offences have, or may have been committed (eg. Murder, Manslaughter including neglect etc), Violent or Unnatural Deaths.

Deaths that may have initially been treated as suspicious at the time of initial attendance, but have been seen to be not so, or where the mechanics of death involves trauma or accident (e.g. suicide, hanging, drowning, overdoses, neglect, Health & Safety issues etc.).

Natural Deaths

Where a doctor may issue a death certificate as the cause of death is natural or following post mortem, the death has been established as being due to natural causes.

The following terms are also important:-

Certified Deaths

A doctor has certified the medical cause of death.

Confirmation of Death / Recognition of Life Extinct

Only Doctors can certify death. Ambulance Nurses, Paramedics, Technicians and AAPs (in set circumstances), undertake the recognition of life extinct but cannot record the medical cause of death.

6.0 Police Attendance at reported Death

The Police will attend reports of death that fall within the following categories: -

- Homicide and all reported 'suspicious deaths', where criminality may be a factor
- All reported violent and unnatural deaths.
- Fatal accidents of all types (e.g. road traffic collision, industrial/workplace incidents)
- Suspected suicide or assisted suicide
- Death with suspected drug abuse a cause.
- Sudden & Unexpected Deaths in Infants & Children (SUDIC)
- Death of a person aged 30 (years) or younger, unless there is an obvious medical reason.
- Persons found dead after forced entry (either by Police Officers or others) into premises. This includes reports of 'Concern for Welfare' to Police, even if the death appears to be from natural causes.

- Death in a public place
- Deaths in private premises where the next of kin, or responsible adult is in attendance, will not take responsibility for the deceased.
- Deaths on/in premises occupied by the Ministry of Defense.
- Where a person's identity is not known or suspected to be false.
- Deaths where the person is not registered with a GP.
- Where the reported death is at a care or nursing home and there are potentially suspicious circumstances.

Suspicious deaths involving suspected criminality. Ensure that the body is not disturbed and that the scene is kept intact to preserve evidence.

7.0 Apparent death by natural causes: - Private Residential Premises

The Police **WILL NOT** attend scenes of routine presumed natural deaths in a private residential premises for circumstances reported from Doctors, hospitals, families or responsible adults, which **DO NOT**, fall into the above category.(See 6.0 Police attendance at reported death).

Reports of deaths from apparent natural causes to the Police will be shared with SCAS who will be the primary response and will attend the scene. If the deceased is inside private premises, a Paramedic/Nurse/Technician/AAP may confirm death following a strict protocol. A form ROLE (Recognition of Life Extinct) and patient report form will be left with the immediate next of kin or responsible adult.

SCAS will be responsible for informing the deceased's GP of the death. This needs to be verbally in hours and via the Out of Hours providers during those times. The ePR record will automatically emailed to a secure email address at the GP practice and printed copies need to be left with the responsible adult/next of kin to the deceased.

For natural / expected deaths the GP is expected to certify the death and provide the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) to deceased's relatives / person taking responsibility. If, however the death is reportable to the coroner for any other reason, then it is the responsibility of the GP to complete an electronic referral and submit to the coroner's office at the earliest opportunity.

If the GP is unwilling/unable to issue a MCCD then it is acceptable to remove the deceased to a Chapel of Rest by Undertakers of the family/responsible persons choice **without** Police attendance. Although the GP may say they haven't seen the patient during the last 14 days, if the death is seen to be natural it's likely the Coroner will support the GP issuing the MCCD. If after the Coroners Officer speaks with the GP there is still an issue the Coroner would arrange to move the body for Post Mortem at that point.

SCAS will inform the Police that death has been confirmed in accordance with the SCAS

protocol.

SCAS staff will provide Police with information from the scene regarding the apparent nature of the incident. This is to include but not exclusive to:-

- Name and contact number for the attending crew
- Time, address & location within the address the deceased person was found by the person who found the deceased
- Circumstances of Death – Based on the initial circumstances, what do you think has happened?
- Name, DOB & address of deceased person
- Person who called the ambulance - Name, DOB, address & relationship to deceased

And the following information to be provided by the attending crew to enable relevant intelligence checks to be completed and a decision on attendance to be made:

- Time, address & location within the address the deceased person was found by the person who found the deceased
- Circumstances of Death – Based on the initial circumstances, what do you think has happened?
- What was the position of the body when you arrived? Have you observed or been told anything that makes you suspicious about the circumstances? Are there any suspicious marks on the body? Where have you looked?
- Do you have any information about the general health of the deceased? Have SCAS had any prior calls relating to the deceased?
- Name, DOB & address of deceased person
- Who is in attendance
- Person who found the deceased - Name, DOB, address & relationship to deceased
- Person who called the ambulance if different - Name, DOB, address & relationship to deceased

Once an assessment of the incident has been made by Police and it is deemed that Police **WILL NOT** attend, the SCAS crew at the scene will inform the next of kin/family;

- To use the undertaker of their choice and they must contact them.
- A copy of the ePR/PCR (CAS 101) will be left with the person taking responsibility.
- To contact the patients GP/ OoHs to report the death and provide the GP with the Patient Report Form (CAS 101) or ePR record.

The Police **WILL NOT** attend presumed Death by natural causes in home circumstances merely to act in a counselling role or to assist in the removal of the body from the scene.

A flow chart of this process is provided in Appendix A. It is presumed within the flow chart that a responsible adult will take responsibility for dealing with the deceased. If this is not

the case, then Police **WILL** attend the deceased location.

8.0 Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR)

Please refer to CSPP 3 Resuscitation Policy (ROLE) for full details on DNACPR and associated directives around the deceased patient. The below definitions have been taken directly from CSPP 3.

Definition

SCAS personnel can only verify the "Fact of Death". They cannot "Certify" the cause of death. This must be undertaken by a Doctor.

There are a number of circumstances whereby SCAS personnel may be required to consider establishing the Fact of Death. These are:

- *Death in a Private residence concurrent with existing medical treatment - colloquially an "Expected Death"*
- *Death in a Private residence - an "Unexpected Death"*
- *Death in a Public Place (i.e. not a Private residence) - an unexpected Death"*
- *Death in an Ambulance*
- *Death in a Major Incident situation*

SCAS policy CSPP 3 applies to all age groups of patient

Adult DNACPR I ADRT

All SCAS personnel may discontinue/withhold resuscitation attempt if:

A Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) order is in place, on the DNACPR form (usually Lilac but can be photocopied or printed on white paper) or a DNACPR notice which has the correct patient details, is completed and signed by a health professional involved in the patients care and is in date:

The form will stay with the person. It will be located in the following places:

- **Hospitals, nursing homes, hospices** - in the front of person's notes
- **In the home** - The tear off slip should be completed and placed in the 'message in the bottle' in the person's refrigerator. The location of the DNACPR form needs to be clearly stated. If the "message in a bottle" is not available, a system needs to be put in place to ensure effective communication of the DNACPR form's location to all relevant parties including South Central Ambulance Service
- **GP surgeries** - In the notes either paper or electronic an 'Alert' should be set up on electronic notes, usually in the 'reminder section.'

9.0 Deaths in the Work Place

Deaths in the workplace will include all instances where death in any workplace occurs. Whilst initially appearing to be accidental, such incidents should not be presumed to be so and the following action, scene preservation, will be taken in order to prevent loss of evidence or information, should the incident subsequently justify investigation as possible manslaughter.

10.0 SCAS Non-Attendance at Obviously Deceased patients

Incidents that are reported to SCAS from Police or Transport Police control rooms, where significant traumatic injuries are likely to have occurred such as railways/motorways, SCAS will not be routinely required to attend where there are obvious un-survivable injuries.

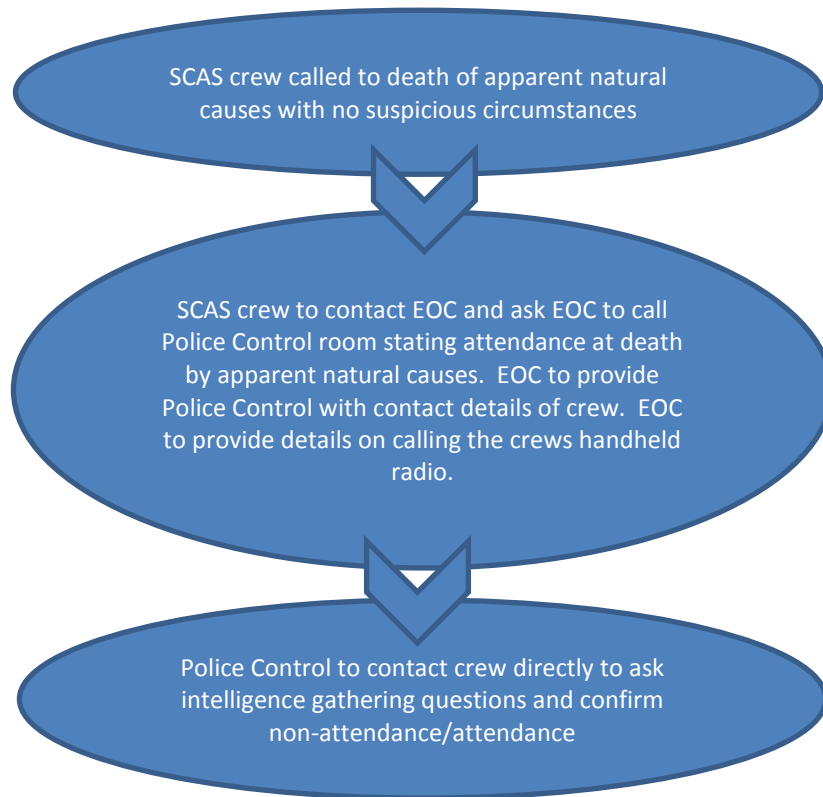
The criteria for injuries not compatible with life are:-

- Hypostasis (pooling of blood by gravity)
- Injury which is obviously not compatible with life:
- Decapitation
- Decerebration (including massive cranial / cerebral destruction)
- Incineration
- Hemitorporectomy (or similar massive injury)
- Decomposition / Putrification

Appendix A: – Flow Chart for Police Attendance at Deceased Patients



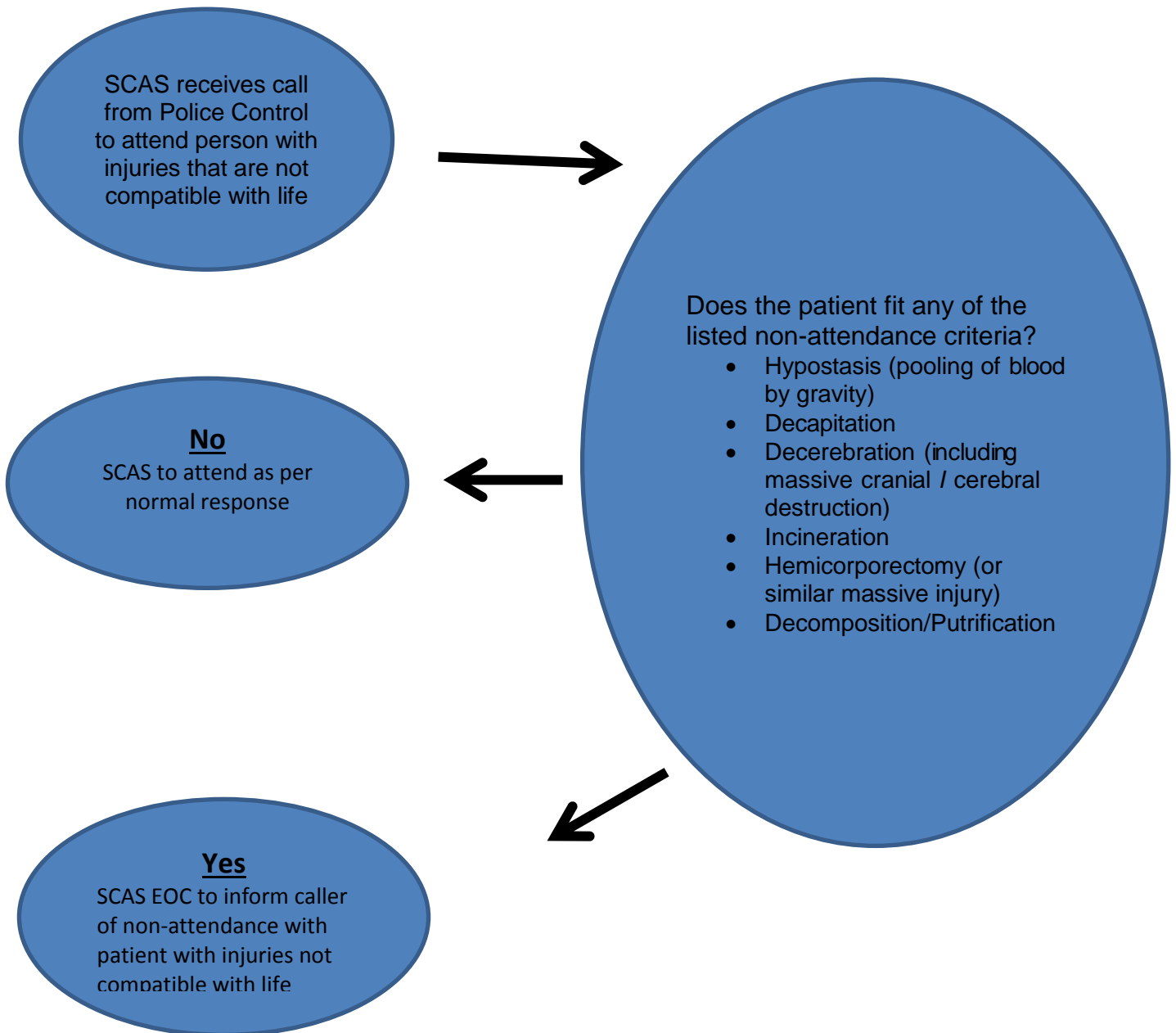
Appendix B: - Process for Informing Police



** SCAS staff will provide Police with information from the scene regarding the apparent nature of the incident. This is to include but not exclusive to the questions below. The answers to these will mean the relevant intelligence checks can be completed and a decision on attendance can be made:

- Name and contact number for the attending crew. This needs to a SCAS number from your handheld radio and not a personal number. Should the Police require a number for future reference then provide either the number for Northern House **01869 36500** or Southern House **01962 898000**.
- Time, address & location within the address the deceased person was found by the person who found the deceased
- Circumstances of Death – Based on the initial circumstances, what do you think has happened?
- What was the position of the body when you arrived? Have you observed or been told anything that makes you suspicious about the circumstances? Are there any suspicious marks on the body? Where have you looked?
- Do you have any information about the general health of the deceased? Have SCAS had any prior calls relating to the deceased? (EOC will be able to give you that information)
- Name, DOB & address of deceased person
- Who is in attendance
- Person who found the deceased - Name, DOB, address & relationship to deceased
- Person who called the ambulance if different - Name, DOB, address & relationship to deceased
- Person who called the ambulance - Name, DOB, address & relationship to deceased

Appendix C: - SCAS Non-Attendance at Obvious Death



APPENDIX D – How to Funeral Directors

If the family do not know of a local Funeral Director they can be directed to one of the following Trade Association web sites where they can search for a local Funeral Director:

National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) - <http://nafd.org.uk/>
Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) - <https://saif.org.uk/>

These web-sites also contain other information which the family member may find useful.

Paupers Funerals/Government Social Fund- If the family do not believe they or the deceased have sufficient funds to pay for this service or a funeral, they may be entitled to help. This should not prevent them from contacting a Funeral Director and arranging for the body to be removed and transported to the Chapel of Rest as the issue of payment will be addressed at a later date.

NAFD

(+44) 0121 711 1343

09.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

SAIF

Office open hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Tel: 0345 230 6777 or 01279 726 777

Fax: 01279 726 300

Email: info@saif.org.uk

SAIF Business Centre

3 Bullfields

Sawbridgeworth

Herts

CM21 9DB