

Subject: Request for information regarding long COVID and COVID vaccines.

FOI reference: 202100238139

Date received: 9 September 2021

Date responded: 16 September 2021

Information requested:

- “1. The date when the extraction of "Long COVID" information from death certificates, for the purposes of keeping statistical records, was initiated.
2. The date when the extraction of "underlying cause of death being due to adverse effects of COVID-19 vaccines" information from death certificates, for the purposes of keeping statistical records, was initiated.
3. The full list of descriptors that are used to describe deaths associated to "long COVID" i.e. the list of descriptors that the NRS uses for associating data/records/statistics to.
4. The full list of descriptors that are used to describe deaths associated with COVID-19 vaccines i.e. the list of descriptors that the NRS uses for associating data/records/statistics to.

To expand on the request 4 such that the NRS is clear on what is being asked for the response by the NRS to request FoI/202100224430, that is in the public domain on the WhatDoTheyKnow platform, states the following:

We do however hold figures on deaths where ‘COVID-19 vaccines causing adverse effects in therapeutic use, unspecified’ was mentioned on the death certificate. Please see Table 12 in our monthly COVID-19 report.

It would reasonably be anticipated that there would be a field in the death certificate that would allow the doctor signing the certificate to state that a COVID-19 vaccine could be involved in the causing the death of the person. Such a descriptor being used for "deaths involving COVID- vaccines" would be expected given that "deaths involving COVID-19" are captured in the statistical data released by the NRS and therefore, logically, it would be expected that "deaths involving COVID-19 vaccines" would also be recorded.”

NRS Response:

1. The addition of the ICD-10 code ‘U09.9 Post COVID condition – unspecified’ was introduced in September 2020 by the World Health organisation (WHO) [Emergency use ICD codes for COVID-19 disease outbreak \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/clinical-management/immunosuppression-in-people-with-covid-19). National Records of Scotland first began to publish figures on this basis on 19 May 2021 but we recoded

data back to the beginning of the pandemic to ensure we picked up all cases from March 2020 onwards.

2. The addition of the ICD-10 code 'U12.9 COVID -19 vaccines causing adverse effects in therapeutic use, unspecified' was introduced in January 2021 by the WHO [Emergency use ICD codes for COVID-19 disease outbreak \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/clinical-management/immunisation-and-vaccination). We first began to publish figures on this basis on 19 May 2021 but we recoded earlier data to ensure we picked up all cases which would qualify for this code.

3. According to WHO guidelines deaths are only assigned a code U09.9 as a contributory factor, not as the underlying cause of death. It would not be possible to give a definitive list of descriptors that are used to describe deaths to which long COVID is a contributory factor as descriptors are at the discretion of the recording doctor. Examples of text appearing on the death certificate which would lead to a U09.9 code being allocated are:

Post COVID-19
Past COVID-19
Previous COVID-19
Prior COVID-19
Cleared COVID-19
Recovered COVID-19

Additionally, if the condition was recorded as occurring more than 12 weeks before death, the following text would also be given a code of U09.9:

Recent COVID-19
Ongoing COVID-19
Long COVID-19
Complication of COVID-19
COVID-19 associated *** (where *** indicates a medical condition)
COVID-19 related *** (where *** indicates a medical condition)

4. There is not a specific field on the death certificate to record whether the death was vaccine-related. If a doctor believes that the death was due to an adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine they will record this in the cause of death field(s). The following text appearing in the cause of death fields on the death certificate would lead to a code of U12.9 being allocated:

COVID-19 Vaccine induced *** (where *** indicates a medical condition)
COVID-19 vaccine related
Adverse effect of COVID-19 vaccine