

Place of Death and Place of Occurrence (of the event which caused the death - external causes only)

The Vital Events database of statistical records of deaths includes information about the place of death and, in the case of deaths from what are referred to as 'external causes' (i.e. accidents, assaults, intentional self-harm, and events of undetermined intent) the place of occurrence of the event which caused the death. This note covers both these data items. It will be seen that the statistical database's information about the place of death and the place of occurrence of the event that led to the death is often insufficient to identify (e.g.) the specific location at which someone tried to commit suicide, particularly as he/she may have died elsewhere (e.g. in hospital) some time afterwards.

'Place of Death' is where the person died, which is recorded in a specific section of the Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death. The relevant guidance to doctors is as follows:

- 3.2 Place of death - you should record, to the best of your knowledge, exactly where the person died (for example, the name of the hospital or the address of a private house). If the person did not die in a place that can be identified by an address give the location (for example, a particular stretch of motorway or a specific area of countryside). This may not be the same as the place where you are filling in the certificate.

(this extract is taken from 'Guidance on the Completion of the Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death', which is available via the ['About the medical certificate of the cause of death'](#) document, on this web site.)

In the case of deaths from external causes (i.e. accidents, assaults, intentional self-harm, and events of undetermined intent) the 'Place of Occurrence' field in the Vital Events database has a code for the type of place where the event occurred, if that is known. The types of place that are identified include 'home', 'residential institution', and so forth (examples of the code-lists given below). The field does not specify the precise location of the event.

National Records of Scotland (NRS) may not have any information at all about the place of occurrence. The Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death does not have a separate section for recording the place of occurrence of the event which caused the death (if that is different from the actual place of death), but such information is occasionally included in the 'cause of death' details - for example, the cause of death might be given as 'fall from a height (cliff)'. The person who registers the death may tell the Registrar where the event that caused the death occurred, or the Registrar may come to know about it from information which is available locally - if so, something to this effect may be put into the 'Registrar's Notes' part of the computer system, and thus become available to NRS. Or, NRS itself may find out about the location of the event that caused the death from media reports. However, if NRS has no information about the place of occurrence, it will simply allocate a code for 'unspecified place'.

The 'place of occurrence' code-list used for deaths which have been registered since the start of 2000 is as follows:

- 0 - Home - NB: not necessarily the person's own home, as this code is used for any non-institutional place of residence, whether or not the deceased lived there
- 1 - Residential institution
- 2 - School, other institution and public administrative area

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- 3 - Sports and athletic area
- 4 - Street and highway
- 5 - Trade and service area
- 6 - Industrial and construction area
- 7 – Farm
- 8 - Other specified places
- 9 - Unspecified place

This code-list is taken from the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision. Many examples of the types of place that are included under each code are given in Volume 1 of the ICD-10 manual (e.g. on pages 979 to 983 of the 2004 Second Edition of Volume 1).

A different 'place of occurrence' code-list was used for the period up to 1999, when the causes of death were coded using ICD-9 codes:

- 0 – Home
- 1 – Farm
- 2 - Mine or quarry
- 3 - Place of industry
- 4 - Sports / recreation area
- 5 - Street or highway
- 6 - Public building
- 7 - Residential institution
- 8 - Other specified place
- 9 - Unspecified or not known

Further information about that code-list is available from Volume 1 of the ICD-9 manual (e.g. on pages 569 to 571 of the 1977 edition).