

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Update 8th April 2020

The members of DMAG held a video conference, including representatives from the Ministry of Justice, from the Department of Health and Social Care and Department of Health Northern Ireland.

1. MoJ Update

The MoJ recognised it was necessary for the sector to have access to the likely number of deaths occurring as a result of the coronavirus. The matter had now been raised with the Permanent Secretary and the Secretary of State. DMAG will be advised if further information is forthcoming.

Clarity concerning the closure of cemeteries in England, resulting from the Coronavirus Regulations, will be provided shortly.

2. DoH NI Update

It was recognised that Northern Ireland shared many of the same issues as the rest of the UK, shortage of PPE and concern over contradictions with the guidance from PHE. In addition, there were specific cultural issues for Northern Ireland where funerals normally take place over a much shorter time scale.

It was hoped that the Chief Medical Officer and the Minister of Health would be issuing revised guidance on 9th April 2020.

3. DHSC Update

The update on the availability of PPE shared by DHSC, in the form of an email, was welcomed by DMAG. It was also clarified that cemetery and crematorium staff could approach their local LRF's for PPE. If there were any difficulties these should be reported back to DHSC.

4. Financial support for the sector

The MoJ are currently commencing a piece of work on the financial resilience of the bereavement sector and sought the support of DMAG. In particular providing information on the nature of the sector, what it looked like in 'steady state', possible consequences arising from the current emergency and what support it may possibly require. It was recognised that any assistance DMAG could provide would be limited both by the lack of financial information on individual areas of the sector and the need to ensure it did not pose any potential, real or perceived conflict with the work being undertaken by the CMA. DMAG agreed to respond with information where they could, but it would be unable to meet the deadline of the following day.



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5. Ashes retention policy

It was agreed that the proposed Ashes Retention Policy should be issued, following amendments which would allow funeral directors to collect ashes where appropriate arrangements are put in place.

6. Data research and collection options

The proposal to gather data on the sector, covering key areas of interest during the current emergency was agreed. RB offered to carry out some preliminary work to develop a proposal outlining the method and areas of research to prompt discussion.

7. Body bags and Natural Burial Grounds

A question had arisen concerning the use of body bags in Woodland Burial sites, from which they were normally excluded. It was agreed that during the current emergency. A pragmatic approach should be adopted and where necessary rules relaxed.

8. Items for future meetings with Cabinet Office/Scottish Government

Items for CO already circulated by JL, no further items for SG at the current time.

9. AOB Round robin

MD confirmed that Debbie Kerslake would produce a one page summary of her article on bereavement through the current emergency to be added to the website. It was also agreed that the DMAG website should have a resource page added to include links to bereavement related charities and advice.



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