

Deceased Management Advisory Group

UPDATE 16th APRIL 2020

The members of DMAG held a video conference on Thursday 16th April 2020, with representatives from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), & Department of Works & Pensions in attendance. The following matters were discussed:

1. BBC BROADCASTS - RADIO 4 AND BBC BREAKFAST TELEVISION

The NAFD had been interviewed by the BBC regarding some local authority crematoria stopping allowing any attendees at a funeral. During the interview the NAFD stated their position that they find this unacceptable and that mourners should be allowed to attend a funeral in accordance with Government guidance.

The FBCA and the ICCM asserted their view to DMAG that all cemetery and cremation authorities must make their own assessment on attendees based on local risk factors. Although they would encourage authorities and companies to continue allowing attendees based on Government guidance for as long as possible, there will be some authorities that are unable to do so due to high risk factors.

DMAG guidance on attendance at funerals will be reviewed and reissued.

2. MOJ Update

Judith Bernstein (JB) informed the meeting that there was an intention to establish a central hub for 'Guidance' on all matters related to the pandemic.

Following the meeting with the Cabinet Office, further guidance is expected on the amended regulations either on Friday or early next week and from Public Health England within the next few days.

It is unlikely that detailed modelling forecasts are going to be received. However, clarity is still required in reporting of deaths involving COVID-19 together with a breakdown of hospital deaths, those in care homes and the community.



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JB asked DMAG for their views on the removal of the right of the Applicant for Cremation to inspect Form 4. Given the concessions already applied to the registration process and the fact there had been a very slight increase in the number of people wishing to inspect Form 4, it was decided that current arrangements should remain in place but be kept under review.

3. DHSC Update

SAIF were thanked for their letter to LRF's which had been approved.

4. PHE

Bernie Hannigan (BH) from PHE had joined the meeting and reported that guidance was being revised under two headings, namely;

- a) Funeral Arrangements
- b) Care of the Deceased

Revised draft guidance is to be issued imminently. DMAG agreed that on receipt of the drafts they would consider them in detail and forward comments as quickly as possible.

The question of how long the virus can survive on surfaces and in deceased people was raised. BH undertook to provide information to DMAG.

The continuing inconsistencies in relation to the supply of PPE was raised.

5. DWP

JB reported that the work submitted on the Economic and Financial Stability of the Sector was being considered and a response was expected shortly.

JB asked for more detail of the numbers employed within the various disciplines in the funeral sector, but acknowledged that this may be difficult to provide in some cases, eg those employed in cemeteries.



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6. LOCAL RESILLIANCE FORUMS

The involvement, support and advice of LRFs varies widely around the country. Specific examples are to be collated and brought to the attention of appropriate authorities, including the Cabinet Office.

The APCC reported that the London LRF has improved functioning since sub-groups were formed – cemetery, crematoria and funeral representatives are in the Storage and Disposal category.

DMAG noted that funeral directors in and around London had been particularly successful in advising families that funerals should be held as soon as possible.

The beneficial impacts of the simplified registration process are now being felt in full.

7. IDENTIFYING MOVING REGIONAL TRENDS

DMAG agreed that they would monitor the areas where reference crematoria and funeral outlets are surveyed to identify changing trends and expand them as required.

8. DATA COLLECTION AND COMPARISON EXERCISE

The FBCA had agreed to cover the cost of establishing the DMAG website. Following on from this generosity, the APCC announced that the costs of the data collection and comparison exercise starting next week would be borne by them.

9. CARE / NURSING HOMES AND DUTY OF DISCLOSURE OF COVID 19 CASES

Care and Nursing Homes are not routinely declaring Covid-19 cases to funeral directors. SAIF are to draft a letter to be sent to their 'trade association'.

10. DMAG GUIDANCE ON FUNERAL ATTENDANCE



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Brendan had drafted an additional paragraph for the DMAG Guidance note on Funeral Attendance. The revised Guidance will be issued once comments have been received and agreed.

11. FUTURE MEETINGS WITH CABINET OFFICE/SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

A full list of DMAG's concerns had been provided to the Cabinet Office for the meeting held earlier in the day. The concerns had been discussed and but not completely answered in some instances.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

The acceptance of shrouds for cremation and burial was discussed and DMAG agreed that they are acceptable.

Clarification is required on whether Covid-19 can be put on an MCCD in its own right. BMA are stating it can whereas GRO are claiming it is insufficient.

The FFMA reported that one of his members currently had 12,000 coffins on order - 10 times his usual order book and that his weekly production totals had risen to between 800 and over 900 a week. It is not known where these coffins are being stored.

