

# Deceased Management Advisory Group

UPDATE 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020

The members of DMAG held a video conference on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020, with representatives from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) present for the open part of the meeting. APCC chaired the meeting.

## DMAG Wider Consultation

### 1. MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MHCLG) Update on 'Places of Worship Task Force'

While places of worship are now open for private prayer, they are not currently open for services but a review is taking place with a view to easing the regulations and to allowing funerals and post funeral rituals and small weddings to take place but it was stressed that the final decision lies with 10 Downing Street. It was pointed out that the government's road map announced in Mid- May had defined a number of stages and while we were currently in Stage 4 it was anticipated that we would soon be moving to Stage 3 (which has taken place since the meeting).

Currently, that while it is most usually recommended that up to 10 people, members of the same family and/or close friends can attend a funeral, it recognised that any restriction on numbers is becoming more and more based on the capacity of the site in line with social distancing rules. The ICCM pointed out different criteria applied in Wales and that the current regulations required that numbers of attendees be kept as low as possible. MHCLG confirmed that a funeral was defined as a service at a crematorium or a burial at the grave side. However, burial and scattering of ashes were not regarded as part of the original ceremony and therefore attendees should be limited to a group of 6 people within the 'close family' criteria. FBCA and SAIF pointed out the difficulty of more people joining in especially in the case of a graveside burial and that there had been a number of disputes between funeral directors and cemetery and crematoria operators as to who was responsible for containing and controlling such situations.

MHCLG expressed their concerns over the dangers of groups intermixing but also made it clear that advice from Public Health England was ultimately the



**FBCA**  
Federation of Burial  
& Cremation Authorities



**ICCM**  
Institute of Cemetery and  
Crematorium Management



The Cremation Society

# Deceased Management

## Advisory Group

responsibility of the Home Office over which they had no influence as there was no automatic communication link between the two functional areas.

In relation to the development of future guidance, ICCM asked that DMAG be allowed to comment on 'guidance' prior to it being issued and while this should be possible, MHCLG emphasised again that policies can be overridden by scientific and medical evidence and advice. It was also pointed out that the Faith Minister had ultimate responsibility for decisions in relation to places of worship. It is anticipated that the present 'Task Force' will publish their review by 25<sup>th</sup> June on the current position, including social distancing, and that any changes will come into effect by 4<sup>th</sup> July.

## 2. MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

ICCM stated that guidance was still awaited in relation to the deletion / disposal of electronic and paper copies of Form 4. The MOJ stated that paper copies should be securely destroyed but if for any reason they were retained then there must be full compliance with GDPR regulations. APCC asked if there were any requirements to be taken into account in relation to the Retention of Records Act, the MOJ undertook to find out which government department had responsibility for the Act but also stated that more information might be available through the National Archive.

The MOJ then went on to say that the form should be able to be downloaded from the website via Adobe Acrobat. The ICCM stated that they were still having difficulties downloading the form and agreed to forward the text of the instructions to the MOJ. The FBCA reminded everyone that the forms had always been regarded as 'sacrosanct' and therefore consideration should be given as to how both Form 1 and the MCCD were being handled / retained and /or destroyed throughout the pandemic and going forward. The FFMA made the point that most funeral directors delivered the forms to the Crematorium by hand. SAIF suggested that efforts be made to establish how LRFs and PMART viewed the forms and when necessary how they had handled them.

APCC asked if any further progress had been made in relation to the next BCAG meeting usually held in June or July following earlier discussions on the matter where it had been recommended that it be held with all those directly involved in the burial and cremation sectors in order to avoid the challenges that had had



**FBCA**  
Federation of Burial  
& Cremation Authorities



**ICCM**  
Institute of Cemetery and  
Crematorium Management



**The Cremation Society**

# Deceased Management Advisory Group

to be faced in relation to communicating within a much larger group as had been the case with meetings with the Cabinet Office.

## 3. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE (DHSC)

DHSC reported that the 'Track and Trace' system went live on 28<sup>th</sup> May. There are 3 tiers in place in relation to follow up contact, namely:

Tier3: Call Handlers receive and transmit information

Tier2: A health professional reviews and progresses the information

Tier1: Public Health officials take over and manage more complex cases and situations, such as a rise in Covid cases in a particular locality.

In terms of defining 'Contacts', a face to face exchange of over 1 minute at a distance of 1 metre or less creates a contact whereas a face to face meeting of up to 15 minutes at a distance of 2 or more metres can be held before a contact is created. If a Perspex screen is in place or if full PPE is being worn by both parties than a contact is not created but a face mask on its own worn by either or both parties is not sufficient and contact will have taken place. In answer to a question from SAIF, it was confirmed that if funeral directors or members of their staff had been in a car with someone who had, within the prescribed incubation period, contracted Covid 19 then those concerned would have to self-isolate. DHSC also confirmed that there were no penalties in place for failing to keep to these requirements.

SAIF then asked that if the App which was being trialled in the Isle of Wight was loaded onto a mobile phone would that then automatically result in the individual being informed that that they had been in contact with someone who had tested positive for Covid19 and to which a positive response was received. However, since the meeting it has become known that no APP will be available until much later in the year.

**DMAG closed this session with grateful thanks to the representatives from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Care for their attendance and their valuable contribution to the ongoing work of DMAG.**



# Deceased Management

## Advisory Group

### DMAG Closed Meeting

#### 1. FUTURE MEETINGS WITH CABINET OFFICE/SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

2.

APCC felt that the meeting held with the Cabinet Office earlier in the day had been more positive, in that specific topics, such as the somewhat variable performance of LRFs in the first wave of the pandemic had been discussed in greater depth and were to be progressed further. However, other DMAG attendees thought that too much of the meeting had been taken up with progressing commercial interests. After some discussion, it was agreed that the FBCA would update the 'Lessons Learnt' document to include responses received to date by the middle of next week, after which a programme for invitees to attend a DMAG meeting would be developed.

#### 3. SAFE FUNERALS PROTOCOL

It was agreed that this topic be postponed until the NAFD were able to be in attendance.

#### 4. LRFs - Improving Communications and Co-ordination of Activities

APCC confirmed that information was being sought from its members on this matter and that it would report once such information had been gathered.

#### 5. AOB ROUND ROBIN

SAIF asked that 'Vaccines' be put on the agenda for the next meeting so that the immunisation of the whole sector could be discussed.

FBCA reported that the topic of 'Funeral Directors acting as agents' had come to the fore again and it was thought that in certain aspects of booking items for the funeral ceremony that this was the case. APCC said that there had been much debate on the subject when the Funeral Ombudsman scheme had been in place and if necessary historical records and copies of correspondence could probably be unearthed.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June at 4pm. The Cremation Society will chair.



**FBCA**  
Federation of Burial  
& Cremation Authorities



The Cremation Society