

Deceased Management Advisory Group

UPDATE 16th JULY 2020

The members of DMAG held a video conference on 16th July 2020, with a representative from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) present for the open part of the meeting.

1. MINISTRY OF JUSTICE UPDATE

MOJ asked how the Bereavement Leaflet was being used and while members had little specific information to impart, it was agreed that information would be sought and fed back to MOJ. It is understood that the leaflet is undergoing revision and it was agreed that a draft would be provided to DMAG members prior to its publication and the need for a very clear layout and clear, straightforward text was again stressed. In the meantime, Members agreed to review the current edition and to feedback any further thoughts to MOJ.

MOJ reported that they had fed back the comments made on the usage and cost of PPE at Monday's meeting but more information would still be welcome which would be forwarded to their contacts within MHCLG who are conducting an overall review of the supply and cost of PPE to the sector.

2. SINGING AT CREMATORIA

The Cremation Society, following on from a discussion with a member of the clergy in the South of England, who seemed committed to allowing singing at funeral services to continue, asked if this a commonly held view and practice in other parts of the UK. ICCM thought a majority of their members were not currently allowing singing to take place and as the recommendation not to sing was only contained in guidance as opposed to being a legal requirement then individual sites should probably carry out a risk assessment in order to make their own decision. The NAFD gave the example of Scotland where singing was originally permitted in crematoria but that has now been retracted following a review by the Inspector of Crematoria.



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It is understood that singing has not been allowed in places of worship since they re-opened in Scotland.

3. WILL FD'S AND CLIENTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES NEED TO WEAR FACE COVERINGS IN AN OFFICE OR HOME WHILST MAKING FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS?

Considerable discussion took place on this issue. The NAFD thought that the revised advice for England was likely to end up very much in line with that for Scotland where facemasks must be worn in shops and that non-compliance would result in fines being imposed. In terms of funeral homes, it was felt that masks should be worn in areas accessed by clients such as in reception, arranging rooms and viewing chapels. Similar principles should apply to crematoria, so masks should be worn in the office to which the public have access and in memorial showrooms and arrangement rooms. FBCA proposed that mourners did not have to wear masks when attending services / ceremonies in the crematorium's chapel and this was accepted by all those present. FBCA also pointed out that masks currently did not have to be worn in Wales. It was therefore felt that Memoria's policy circulated by the FFMA earlier in the day was somewhat 'over the top'. APCC suggested that once DMAG's policy was confirmed and taking into account any further pertinent changes announced by central government prior to the beginning of next week, that Howard Hodgson or a senior member of his team be invited to a DMAG meeting. The item will be put on the agenda for the DMAG meeting on Monday 20th July in order to allow further discussion.

4. DISTANCING AT FUNERALS

ICCM reminded the meeting that in relation to places of worship, a 2 metre distance should be maintained wherever possible and where it is not feasible then the guidance states that one metre plus should be maintained. It was thought that a prime risk was outside of the chapel when mourners were greeting each other after the ceremony. APCC thought to maintain 2 metres in an FD's service chapel would not always be possible. SAIF was not sure if members were using their service chapels at present and gave an example of a member who was using theirs for viewing of the deceased but only allowing 2 mourners in at any one time. It was agreed that efforts would be made to obtain more information on



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ICCM
Institute of Cemetery and
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the matter. FBCA reported that it appeared that a couple of CMG crematoria in the North West had reduced the number of mourners, in one case it was thought from 40 to 12. APCC is to contact CMG in order to try and clarify the position.

5. LRFs

It had become apparent at the meeting with the Cabinet Office earlier in the day that there was both a greater realisation of the considerable variations in LRF's performance during the first wave of the pandemic and a greater determination to try and improve the situation in readiness for any second wave. It had been confirmed at the Cabinet Office meeting that there was a full list of LRF contacts on the government's website. APCC suggested that efforts be made to try and establish better communication, information and liaison routes with LRFs. The NAFD reported that they had contacted all 38 LRFs earlier in the lockdown and received a very varied set of responses. It had been difficult in many instances to establish the issues where support might be appreciated, as under the umbrella of 'confidentiality' for their members they had refused to divulge detailed information. APCC wondered if a possible approach could be made to the Chairperson of each LRF and SAIF expressed concern over the part the multiple groups might play in the process. As a first step in trying to encourage a more co-operative and co-ordinated approach, it was agreed that key issues for consideration be identified, which would include the storage and distribution of PPE, and be discussed by DMAG at their next meeting on Monday.

6. NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

In terms of establishing the final requirements on the use of medical grade PPE, particularly in respect of the 'Track and Trace' programme in England and the 'Track and Protect' programme in Scotland, SAIF are to ask their contact of the most appropriate person to get in touch with. There is also a need to confirm that in Scotland, just the lead mourners' contact details are recorded. The NAFD are therefore going to invite the representative from Scottish Government to Monday's meeting.



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DMAG CLOSED MEETING

1. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS WITH CABINET OFFICE / SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

It was agreed that once the priority items, such as LRFs and revised guidance have been established at Monday's meeting, the NAFD will forward the details to the Cabinet Office in order to give them more lead time to progress them prior to their meeting with sector representatives on Thursday 23rd July.

2. AOB ROUND ROBIN

TELEGRAPH ARTICLE

ICCM, as agreed at the previous meeting, had produced a draft letter to the Minister of Health and Social Care, the overall content of which was thoroughly approved. APCC said they would submit a very few suggested amendments prior to its despatch.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday 20th July at 4 p.m. The Cremation Society will chair the meeting.

