

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Update 7th December 2020

The members of DMAG held a video conference on the 7th December, with representatives from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Welsh Government (SC) and the Scottish Government (SG) present for the 'Open' part of the meeting. Apologies were received from the ICCM. APCC chaired the meeting.

DMAG Wider Consultation

1. Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Update.

It was reported that a meeting is to be held this coming Wednesday with relevant parties on the role of coroners in relation to supposed backlogs in processing cases. The precise reasons for this claimed situation is not entirely clear but it was thought more likely to refer to delays in processing paperwork and/or the release of the deceased from hospital mortuaries than to delays in carrying out the funeral. Earlier in the day the MOJ had asked DMAG members to comment on suggestions that currently there was a shortage of cremation capacity in Kent, but no substantive evidence had been forthcoming. NAFD apologised that they had not been able to respond within the short timeframe available. APCC also apologised as their representative had been dealing with another urgent matter at the time.

The Welsh government's attendee enquired if a new paperwork system for coroners was under consideration as it had been suggested to him that this was the case. The MOJ undertook to approach the head of their Coroner's unit and to provide a reply as soon as possible. SAIF asked if it was correct that data from Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) was forwarded to the MOJ once a fortnight. The MOJ replied that all data received was sent onto the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), who are holding four separate meetings with LRFs on Tuesday and Thursday which will also be attended by the MOJ. There is a concern that LRF information is becoming more divergent.

SAIF asked if hospital morticians were in the first category of health workers to receive the vaccine and the MOJ undertook to make enquiries.



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2. Welsh Government (SC)

The representative reported that while people who are self-isolating or Covid-infected can attend a funeral of a close relative, the guidance is designed to make people seriously consider the implications of doing so. In addition, the organiser of the funeral has the authority to prevent or allow their presence. The one difference with the English position is that a close friend can also ask to attend. The requirements in respect of PPE are in line with those for England. The latest 'Guidance' had been circulated earlier in the day and it was made clear that comments and suggested amendments would be welcomed.

3. Scottish Government (SG)

The representative advised that following consultation with relevant parties, it would appear that all publicly operated crematoria and cemeteries would be closed for 4 days over both the Christmas and New Year holiday periods.

DMAG Closed Meeting

1. Notes from previous meeting.

These were agreed and will be placed on the DMAG website.

2. Items for future meetings with Cabinet Office/Devolved Governments.

It was agreed that the letter sent last week to JCVI would be followed up with both a further letter from DMAG which SAIF agreed to organise and one from the Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Funerals and Bereavement, which the NAFD are progressing.

Both the FBCA and APCC felt that the list being provided to the Cabinet Office was lengthening without substantive responses being received. It was agreed that the NAFD would in the first instance raise our concerns in this regard with the Chairman of the weekly meeting with the sector and arrange for him and/or nominated colleagues to attend a future DMAG meeting, an objective of which would be to try and elicit more finite decisions, thereby hopefully reducing the number of 'live' issues tabled.



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3. CMA Report pending

Both the NAFD and SAIF reported that they had been asked by the CMA to verify and confirm certain passages relating to them but as yet no specific date for publication of the final report had been announced.

4. APPG on Funerals and Bereavement

APCC had circulated a summary note, in terms of potential objectives and priorities, in relation to DMAG's involvement with the APPG and the issues arising were discussed in some detail. The Cremation Society believed that initially, emphasis should be placed on linking matters to the pandemic as this is currently in the forefront of parliamentarians' minds and likely to remain so for some time to come. The FBCA thought that it was equally important to put renewed effort into some of the longer-term issues such as the re-use of graves as local authorities were having to invest heavily into developing new cemeteries whereas if re-use was 'legalised' across the UK then much needed monies could be diverted to other uses. The Cremation Society also felt that it was important not to lose sight of the positive outcomes arising out of the pandemic such as the streamlining of death certification and registration processes and the 'Lessons Learned' exercise.

The NAFD reported that they had been reviewing the activities of the APPG on Coronavirus, and had noted that they had been holding 'Evidence Sessions' whereby papers and information were presented to members for them to progress and it was thought this process could be adopted in relation to Funerals and Bereavement. Members were asked to circulate their suggestions in respect of the proposed relationship with the APPG prior to the Strategy Meeting which is being held with JBP Associates on Monday 14th December between 12 noon and 1 p.m.

5. AOB Round Robin.

It was agreed that the final DMAG meeting prior to the Christmas holiday break would be held on Monday 21st December and that seasonal attire would be optional.

FBCA to chair the next meeting – Thursday 11th December 2020 at 4 p. m. APCC have tendered their apologies.



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